

THE AWAKENING

William A. Cooper

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THE AWAKENING

By REV. DR. COOPER

A Portrayal of Negro Life

Together We Live

Thank God for a Song

The Awakening

The Awakening

*Sermons and Sermonettes
on Special Occasions*

BY

Rev. William A. Cooper, D.D.



An Exposition-Testament Book

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To
all people
with whom I have worked in my long ministry,
and before,
who have contributed to my success

GIFT, KEVIN CHERRI

Preface

IN THE living room of my home I have a corner that means much to me. There is a plain white bookcase about three feet high. On its shelves are *The March of Democracy*, by James Truslow Adams, *Abraham Lincoln*, by Carl Sandburg, *The Source Book*, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* and many other prized books.

Hanging on the wall above the bookcase are three of my prize-winning portraits: *The Vanishing Washerwoman*, which brought my work to public attention by winning Harmon Foundation honors in New York City; *Little Brother*, which was the cover page picture of the *Elementary Magazine* of the Methodist Church in 1935; and *Louise*, the portrait selected by the Governor's Jury of North Carolina in the National Exhibition of American Painters in New York City.

I carefully placed on the top of this bookcase some of my writings. There was the *Quarterly Review*, a magazine of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church that carried an article written by me. The next was a national magazine, *Senior Citizen*, that carried my article "After Retirement What?" Then came a booklet, *Educating Through Fine Art*, written by me for use by the teachers of North Carolina (also used in Virginia). Three of my books followed: *A Portrayal of Negro Life*, published in 1936 under the auspices of Duke University, the University of North Carolina and the North Carolina State Department of Public Instructions; then *Together We Live*, published by Eden Publishing House in January, 1962; and finally my novel, *Thank God for a Song*, which is just off the press. I thought of the next book that is ready for a publisher, *Overcoming Handicaps*, which is my autobiography. As I looked at these books, something seemed to say to me: "Man, you have been a preacher for fifty years, and still you have no sermon in print. Why?" I turned and went upstairs to bed, but not to sleep. The question kept ringing in my mind: Why? Why? Why?

I tried to excuse myself by saying, "I am a pastoral preacher, and not the conventional type. My sermons have had a local interest and were for a specific time." The answer came, "But thousands of people came to Christ under your preaching. Some of those sermons should be in print." Then I thought of the tragedy of hundreds of our ministers who slave, study and pray to prepare great sermons, then die without leaving a single sermon on record for coming generations. I am leaving books on art, race relations and a novel on Negro church life in the rural South. Why shouldn't I pass on to coming generations a few of my sermons delivered over radio and television or on special occasions? I resolved to do so—out of gratitude to God, who has brought me over the rough ways of life and through the ups and downs of a long career in the ministry. I resolved to do this without thought of compensation. When I made this decision, sleep came.

I offer these messages with no thought of reaching excellency in homiletics, or of establishing myself as a great preacher. I only hope they will inspire and help someone. I am in the evening of life and seek only to help someone and have my Saviour say to me, "Well done."

W. A. C.

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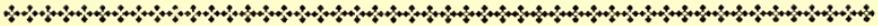
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THE AWAKENING

I

*Sermons Preached on KXOX Radio "Church of the Air" Program**



Redigging the Wells of the Fathers

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.—GENESIS 26:18

ABRAHAM and his son, Isaac, were pioneers. Pioneers have always run into great difficulties and have had to overcome many handicaps. In my childhood, my father would plow the field between our house and a neighbor's house we frequently visited. In doing so, he would plow up the path we had made. The first few trips to the neighbor's house were through fresh-plowed ground and the walking was difficult. But before many days we had made a beaten path again and found it much easier to walk in a beaten path. So it is with pioneering; there is no beaten path to follow, and many adjustments have to be made.

* The Metropolitan Church Federation of Greater St. Louis sends its voice over the air through its appointed representatives speaking on both radio and television. I have had the honor of representing the Federation on many occasions and am including here some of the messages used.

Abraham and Isaac found their problem to be a lack of adequate water supply for their cattle. There was plenty of water down in the ground, under their feet, but to get it they had to dig for it. So, we are told, they dug wells to provide the water they needed. This suggests that God has made ample provision to supply our needs if we are willing to dig for it. What we need is often under our very feet, but we have to dig for it.

Abraham died and the enemy filled the wells he and Isaac had dug, and there was not water available for the cattle. But Isaac didn't give up, our text says:

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father . . .

This suggests that things don't always stay put. We often have to redo the things we did last year. Things just don't stay in place, because the enemy will work havoc with our plans.

Our fathers dug valuable wells to supply the needs of our civilization. First, wells that supply our faith in God. Second, wells that supply freedom of worship. Third, wells that supply our faith in the equality of men.

The Pilgrim fathers believed in God and were willing to brave the dangers of the Atlantic Ocean, and the hardships and perils of wilderness life, in a new world called America, because of their faith in God and in the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. They wanted to get away from forced ritualism in religion and wanted freedom of worship in a land where there were no kings, princes, dukes or earls. They wanted a land where all men were equal, and they dug mighty wells that supplied the fresh waters for their religious concepts.

Many of those wells are in constant danger of being filled by the enemy, so that we forget the America for which the Pilgrim fathers suffered, and lose sight of the great values that gave birth to this nation. Our need today is to redig the wells of the fathers, especially the deeply spiritual wells of faith in God.

The scripture states that not only did Isaac redig the wells, but

he dug other wells. This suggests that we must not only keep the good our fathers gave us, but we must expand that good. We should be more deeply religious than our fathers were; we should be more tolerant because of our increased knowledge; we should be more dedicated to the principles of the brotherhood of man: because of our opportunity to see the world and the needs of brotherhood on a wider scale.

Let us dedicate our lives this morning to redigging the wells of the fathers.

The Potter and the Clay

Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again, another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" saith the Lord, "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."—JEREMIAH 18:3-6

JEREMIAH had grown despondent under suffering. He had seen Israel at the height of her glory: now he was looking upon an Israel in captivity. Her great prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, had been carried from their homeland, and were held in captivity by the Babylonians, along with the upper class of Jews. God has his own way of revealing his purpose to his children. In this case, he caused Jeremiah to walk down by the potter's house, where the potter was working at his potter's wheel, making vessels out of wet clay.

Jeremiah saw the potter put the clay on the wheel, and take his finger, and sometimes his elbow, and shape the wet clay into the vessel he wanted, as he turned the wheel. Jeremiah saw a piece of

rough material, probably gravel, in the clay that marred the vessel as it hit the potter's finger. He saw the potter tear down the vessel he had started and make it over, and sometimes even make it into another vessel. While looking at the potter work, God spoke to Jeremiah, saying: "My servant, this is my answer to your questioning. Israel is but clay in my hands. I am making out of Israel what I want them to be. If the potter can tear down a marred vessel and make it over, don't I have the right to tear down a rebellious, marred nation, and make it over, so that it comes up to my design for it?"

This lesson is designed to teach mankind, everywhere, that humanity is but clay.

Second, that clay becomes dignified when it yields itself to God and falls into the hands of the Divine Potter. God is the Potter making out of every soul that yields itself to Him something very useful in God's universe. All vessels are important in their given places.

Some vessels are made to carry water; some are cooking utensils to be used about the kitchen; some are ornaments to decorate the parlor; but all are important. That ornament that sits on the shelf to be admired by the guest need not boast of its dignity, for if there were no cooking utensils, there would possibly be no guest. If there were no water vessels, humanity would suffer; so the honor lies in being the best in one's own given field.

God the Potter has your life and my life in his hands. We are but clay in the hands of God. Sometimes some ugly material gets into us that mars our lives and spoils the vessel that God is trying to make out of us, so that God has to tear us down and our lives have to be begun all over again, in order to make something out of us that God can use in his Divine plan.

If failure comes, let us not whine or blame the Divine Potter for making us begin again, but let us ask God, whether through sickness, failure or defeat, to make us what He would have us be. Let us say, in the language of the poet:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.
Mould me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with Thy spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me!

The Big Surprise

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?"

And the King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Then shall they also answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw

we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

Then shall he answer them, saying, "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.—MATTHEW 25:33-46

OUR LORD is here teaching that eternal salvation depends upon the practical application of Christianity. He knew that there would be many, in all ages, who would talk Christianity but would not live it, and he wanted to emphasize that Christianity is not in what one may talk but in what one may live.

He pictures the Son of man coming in his glory and all his holy angels with him, and said, "Then he shall sit upon the throne of his glory." And all the nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall proceed to separate the sheep from the goats—in other words, the good from the bad, the Christians from the sinners.

There was great surprise among the host gathered before him on that day. Many were put over in the good class who perhaps were doubtful about their status. Many were put in the bad or sinful group who were deeply shocked because they were not classed as saints, and our Lord proceeds through this parable to lay down his final basis for his judgment of mankind.

In verses 34 through 40, he states to the redeemed, the ones on his right:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?"

And the King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily, I

say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Then he turned to those on his left, who felt they should get by on their profession of faith, or supposed piety, and said:

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Then shall they also answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or thirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

Then shall he answer them, saying, "Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

This should be a timely lesson for those of us living today, when the tendency of man is to foster his own personal interest, and to keep so busy doing so that he is likely to forget the unfortunate people who are not in position to contribute anything to his economic success or social influence. Jesus would have us mindful of the fact that the greatest contribution to our soul's welfare, and eternal security, comes from unselfishly helping unfortunate people who can give us nothing in return. In other words, our soul's growth and happiness in this life, and in the life to come, comes from helping the most unfortunate.

Jesus names them: the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. This who had administered to these people were called blessed and admitted to the kingdom God had prepared for them. They were surprised to know how much God values their service to these lowly people.

Those who were too busy, or who neglected to minister to these lowly people, were sent away into everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels. They too were surprised at

their fate and asked: "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

Jesus answered, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

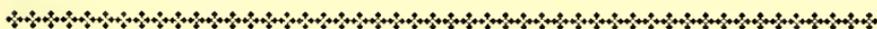
Well might we pray:

Lord, let me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel down to pray,
My prayer will be for others.

For our soul salvation depends upon our service to God through helping the least of his children.

III

Sermons Preached on KXLW Radio *"The Outstanding Pastor of the Week" Program*



Fear Not

Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.—II KINGS 6:16

THERE IS too much fear in our world today. The late President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in our national crisis, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." Fear causes people to do many silly, ungodly things that will eventually destroy them. Fear is the enemy of mankind. The only answer to fear is faith. Faith is urgently needed in our present-day national, international and interracial crisis. This faith must be threefold: faith in our fellow man, faith in ourselves and faith in God.

Our civilization depends upon our faith in our fellow man. Trade, industry and our whole social and economic structure demand that we have faith in someone besides ourselves. We must trust people and they must trust us. We must believe that there are far more good people in all races than bad.

To succeed and be happy, one must have faith in one's self. Faith to believe that, whatever may come, *I can take it*—this faith in one's self comes as a result of preparation to meet any crisis.

One day the owner of a large western farm was visiting his farm, which was operated by a hired superintendent. During the night a great storm arose; the wind blew fiercely and the storm raged. The owner, fearing for the safety of his stock, got out of bed and rushed to the room of the superintendent and knocked. The superintendent was asleep. He awoke and came to the door. The owner cried out, "Why are you sleeping when the storm is raging and my stock is in danger?"

The superintendent calmly looked at him and quietly answered, "Before going to bed, I saw to it that every pig pen was firmly fastened down, that the barn doors were all locked and that everything was done that can be done to protect your farm from the storm. Go back and go to sleep. I can sleep in a storm because I prepare for it in the hours of calm." Faith to face the storms of life comes from thorough preparation of body, mind and soul in the hours of calm.

The Syrian army was making war on Israel. They had failed in several battles because Israel had advance notice of their plans. The Syrian king asked who among them was giving Israel notice. He was told that Elisha, a prophet in Israel, knew what he said in his bed chamber and was giving the information to the king of Israel. The Syrian king sent an army to capture Elisha.

Elisha's servant awoke one morning and saw the Syrian army surrounding them and cried out, "Alas, my master! How shall we do?"

Elisha quietly answered, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

The secret of Elisha's calm was his faith in God. He knew that God had invisible armies to protect his children. My plea to you is, let the armies of Satan rage, but fear not. Trust God. He is able to take care of his children.

Spiritual Blindness

And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see."—II KINGS 6:17

IN A preceding message, we used the biblical story of the Syrian army making war on Israel, and the Syrian king's being vexed when told the prophet Elisha foiled his plan by keeping the king of Israel posted as to his intentions. He sent an army to capture Elisha. Elisha's servant awoke one morning and found that he and his master were surrounded by the Syrian army and cried out, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?"

Blindness is a terrible handicap. Of all blindness, spiritual blindness is the worst enemy to happiness. One may be physically blind but serenely happy if one's heart is right with God and one's fellow man. But spiritual blindness leads to fear, greed, hate and eventually death.

Elisha's servant had good eyesight physically, but he was blind spiritually. He could see the physical Syrian army and feared it. He could not see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding them—the army of angels God had sent to defend him. Therefore he cried out in distress, "Alas, my master! How shall we do?"

Elisha had his spiritual eyes open. He could see God's plan for his defense, the army of angels. Elisha did not whine—he prayed. There is a vast difference in praying and whining to God. Some people whine to God instead of praying. They spend too much time complaining about wrongs done them. Elisha calmly prayed, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see."

God has provided about us everything that we need, if we could only open our eyes and see it. Yes, there is evil in the world; there are evil people in the world; there are wrongs that must be corrected; but we need to pray for clear spiritual vision. If our

eyes are opened spiritually, we will happily find that there is more good in the world than evil; that there are more good people in the world than bad; that God will give his people strength to correct the wrongs of life.

When the young man's eyes were opened, and Elisha was delivered, Elisha's keen spiritual vision led him to show mercy and not revenge. When one's spiritual eyes are opened, one realizes the unchangeable law of God—that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. One realizes that the teachings of Christ are the hope of this dark and troubled world, and is inclined to pray for that faith we so much need, for faith will help cure spiritual blindness.

We need to pray in the language of the poet:

Oh, for a faith that will not shrink,
 Though pressed by every foe,
 That will not tremble on the brink
 Of any earthly woe!

A faith that shines more bright and clear,
 When tempests rage without;
 That when in danger knows no fear,
 In darkness feels no doubt

Lord, give us such a faith as this,
 And then, whate'er may come,
 We'll taste, e'en here, the hallowed bliss
 Of an eternal home.

The Formula for Success

Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.—PSALM 37:3

THE PSALMIST David is taking a frank look at life and giving us a sane, trustworthy formula for success.

Men strive vainly for success. Some believe education to be the guarantee of success; others believe economic security to be the answer; and there are still others who believe that success depends upon one's contacts or social status. All of these are helpful when rightly used, but none of them is the real answer. David admonishes us to do two things if we want to become successful and happy.

First, trust in the Lord. Men and nations have trusted in armies, culture, finance, and have failed. But no man or nation has ever truly trusted in God and really failed. This brings us to the question: What does it mean to trust in God? When has one really trusted in God? The answer is, "No man has really trusted in God until he has lived so that God can trust him." So to trust in God is to bring one's whole life, one's action and one's thinking into harmony with the will and teachings of God.

David's formula for success is not a passive religion; it is an active religion. It does not say *be good*, but says trust in the Lord and *do good*. A successful life is a life of doing good.

We often face crisis in life when we don't want to stand up and be counted. We are inclined to content ourselves with saying, "I don't wrong anybody: why should I be bothered about the other fellow's problem? 'Just let me live in my house by the side of the road and be a friend to man.'" But David implies that this is not enough, that one must get into the road and not remain by the side of the road. Yes, get in the road and do good, helping the people carry their burdens and find their way to right and to God. David gives two promises to those who will be active Christians. The first is "So shalt thou dwell in the land." This carries with it a promise of permanent citizenship. The next promise is a promise of economic security, "Verily thou shalt be fed."

This formula does not necessarily mean that we are going through life on flowery beds of ease, for we will find times when we will want to cry with the poet:

Oh, it is hard to work for God,
To rise and take his part

Upon this battlefield of earth,
And not sometimes lose heart!

But right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin!

Divine Protection

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.—PSALM 91:4

THE PSALMIST is here picturing the happy state of the godly, or righteous, person. He is showing how God protects his children. When he states, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust," I get a new feeling of the nearness of God and the warmth of His presence. I suppose this is so because of my childhood experience with the chickens about our little home. It was one of my chores to care for the chickens, and I like to recall some of the lessons, learned from the task, that have enabled me to better interpret this verse. I shall pass a few of them on to you.

When a hen began clucking, indicating that she was ready to take to her nest to set, she would be given thirteen eggs on which to sit. When the little chicks were first hatched out, they had no feathers to protect them from the chilly weather and would die unless given protection. The mother hen had to cluck to them and call them under her wings for shelter from the cold. Under her wings the little chicks found the warmth their little bodies needed. So do God's children find warmth and comfort under his wings. If this cold world is chilling your soul, go to Jesus in prayer and meditation and he will warm your whole life up.

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and grief to bear;
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!

I have seen the hawk circling above our yard, and have heard the call of the mother hen to her little ones as she stretched her wings to provide them shelter; and I have seen them run to her and hide under her wings. She closed her wings over them, making it look as if they were not there. The little ones stayed there until the danger was past. How like God, our heavenly Father! When danger is near, He calls His children to perfect shelter under His wings, covers them with His feathers so that the enemy can not destroy them. If there is danger in the air this morning, find shelter under God's wings.

I have watched the mother hen carry her chickens, in search for food, far away from the little coop prepared for their shelter. I have seen the storm gather too rapidly for her to get them to shelter. The rain would have drowned them, at their stage of development, but not the mother hen, who was fully feathered. I have seen her call the little chickens under her wings and sit out in the rain until the storm was over. I have seen the little ones, of different color, stick their little heads out from under the mother hen's wings, and have noticed that they were perfectly dry. What a beautiful picture of divine protection from the storms of life! Little heads sticking out to look on a rain-soaked world, yet they are perfectly dry because of the shelter of the mother's wings. So does God protect us from the storms of life.

He is calling to us this morning, saying, "Come unto me . . . I will give you rest . . . Let not your heart be troubled . . . I will give you comfort . . . I will protect you from the storms of life if you will only come under the shelter of my wings."

The Rod of His Wrath

I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.—LAMENTATIONS 3:1

THE WRITER of the book Lamentations is supposed to have been Jeremiah. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel lived at the same time. His nation, Israel, had fallen from its former glory and had been taken by the enemy into captivity. Daniel was retained in Babylon, where he was interpreting the strange dreams of the king of the Babylonian Empire. Ezekiel was with another group of captive Israelites, a few hundred miles up the river from Babylon, where he was having his vision of dry bones and other visions, while Jeremiah was left in the homeland of the Jews, with the humble, defenseless people who had been left behind. He was lamenting the downfall of the Jews and became known as the Prophet of Tears.

Jeremiah attempts to analyze the suffering and downfall of the Jews and makes himself a representative sufferer when he says, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." He sees God as a father who is displeased with the behavior of his children, Israel, and is applying the rod to them just as a father applies the switch to a disobedient child.

This text has a few comforting suggestions, even to those being punished.

First, it suggests that they are being punished by a loving father, not by a disinterested stranger. The father who punishes his child for disobedience loves him even while administering punishment and hopes to save the child through the punishment. In other words, the child is punished for the child's good, not for the pleasure of the father. When I look at my own sufferings or upon other suffering in the hospital or in sick beds, I like to think that my Heavenly Father knows the purpose of the suffering, and that when he has purified and strengthened the sufferer, the suffering

soul will see and understand God's purpose.

The text suggests, secondly, that suffering will not last always. The loving father who applies the switch to the disobedient child is as happy to discontinue the punishment as the child is to have it discontinued, when there is no further need of punishment. Every father who corrects his child does so with the hope that the child will respond to correction and become an outstanding citizen. If the father is a doctor, he hopes that the child will follow his footsteps and become an outstanding doctor. Whatever the profession, business or occupation of the father, he hopes that the son will grow up and reflect credit upon him. So does God hope, while punishing his children, that they will respond to correction and become outstanding citizens in the Kingdom of God.

I therefore ask you this morning, wherever you are or whatever your sufferings may be, to look on the bright side of life and say with Job, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold," or with Jeremiah in the text, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath"—but I can take it and come forth a better child of God.

The Staggering Cost of Fear

And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth:
lo, there thou hast that is thine.—MATTHEW 25:25

AFTER NEARLY half a century of studying the parable of the talents, I am convinced that the most gripping statement is the declaration of the condemned man, who had failed to develop his one talent, in which he frankly states, "I was afraid." I have studied human behavior through the ages and am convinced that most human beings can account for their failures by simply saying, "I was afraid."

The man with one talent did not steal his Lord's money; he did not misappropriate it; he did not let it rust or deteriorate. He wrapped it well and hid it away securely. His sin was that he was afraid to take a chance and invest it wisely, as he was supposed to have done. When we study this man and his condemnation, I would like for us to take a frank look at ourselves, and see what part fear is playing in our lives.

First, some people could correct many wrongs and bless our civilization if they would speak out for what they believe to be right; but they are afraid of incurring the ill will of their friends and society and therefore keep their mouths shut when they should speak out.

Some people have great talents that they could develop and with which they could bless the world, but they are afraid of failure in trying and therefore allow the hidden talent to be lost because they are afraid.

A successful life cannot be built on fear, but must be built on faith. The farmer who plows his ground and plants his seed to rot in the earth must be able to see, in the future through the eyes of faith, a ripened harvest. If fear keeps him from planting, he can never reap a harvest. This is true of the industrialist—he must tie up his money and time in the goods he hopes to sell, trusting God, his fellow man and himself, if he is to become a success.

The man with the one talent was afraid. What he needed was somebody to help him conquer or master his fears. This is the need of our world today. This is the job of our schools, our churches and our whole civilization—the job of helping men rise above their fears. This job starts with the baby in the cradle, who must be taught to overcome silly fears. The little child must be taught not to be afraid to talk; grownups have to be taught not to be afraid to attempt to make a public talk or to pray in public. People need to be taught not to be afraid to take a stand for right.

Great encouragement is offered in this parable: the two men who took a chance in the framework of their legitimate society were happily rewarded. The man who succumbed to fear had no

wrong recorded against him, except the fact that he succumbed to fear and did not develop his talent. He was condemned and cast into outer darkness.

Our talents may not be as great as those of someone else, but they are ours, and God holds us responsible for development of only what he has given us. May God grant that we may have the courage to take a chance with God and bless the world, and enrich our lives, by developing our talents, however small they seem to us.

God's Design for Our World

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.—JOHN 3:16

THIS TEXT suggests that God had a pattern or design for our world. When I walk the streets in the slum area of our city and see ugly, dilapidated buildings and dirty sidewalks; when I see ragged, dirty, hungry children playing in filth; when I see drunkenness and hear profanity coming from the mouths of grownups; when I see diseased people bent over, often on sticks and crutches; when I go inside of those homes, as I am sometimes called upon to do, and see the emaciated, undernourished, lying in dirt on sickbeds: I am forced to ask myself, "What happened to the beautiful world God designed?"

My mind then goes back to the Genesis story of creation and the disobedience of the first man, Adam, and the punishment he brought on because of his sin, and I shudder to think of what man has done to spoil God's plan or design for our world.

God created a world free from sin, fear, trouble, sickness and death. God created a beautiful world, with singing birds and

beautiful flowers, pure souls with happy hearts, and He came down into the garden to commune with man and contribute to his happiness. God gave man plenty to eat and pointed out just one tree of which man was forbidden to eat.

Man has never liked restrictions; he wanted to do as he pleased. Satan took advantage of this tendency in man and induced him to eat of the forbidden fruit, contrary to the commandment of God. This disobedience spoiled the design of God for our world. Man's heart became burdened; his life became confused; his soul became filled with fear; he was conscious of his nakedness and attempted to hide from God.

When God visited the garden in the cool of the evening, as was his custom, there was no lighthearted, happy man to meet him as before.

God called out, "Adam, where art thou?"

Adam answered and began to make excuses. He cried out, "The woman thou gavest me," showing the tendency of man to blame someone else for his downfall.

When God questioned Eve, she put the blame on the serpent.

There is no excuse for an excuse. God informed them of the punishment they had brought upon themselves. But God did not turn his back on them and leave them to their fate without hope, for they were God's creation, and our text reads, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

God loved man in spite of his fallen state. God loved man so much that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem man from his misery and sin, and set up the condition upon which man might be saved: ". . . that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life."

Sin, misery and the evils man faces today can be overcome by belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, belief to the extent that we are willing to shape our lives and direct our thoughts and actions according to our Christian beliefs.



Other Radio and Television Sermons



Genuine Christianity

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

—LUKE 10:25

THE WORLD is great for testing its products and theories. Testing stations and laboratories are set up somewhere over the country to test the genuineness of nearly everything. Microscopes, test tubes and experimental stations of various kinds are in great demand. Men are careful about testing theories, and test them by time, experience and their ability to stand up and meet the demands under strange and difficult situations.

Especially have men been interested in trying to find the Genuine in Religion, since their lives, both here and hereafter depend upon the genuineness of their religion.

A certain lawyer came to Jesus asking definite, direct questions that finally boil down to this: "What is the religion, or religious practice, that I must follow to lead me to eternal life? Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus gives his answer in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which brings out five definite truths about Genuine Christianity.

1. The first truth is that genuine Christianity must be strong enough to make us recognize our obligation to the fellow who is down.

Jesus selects for his answer the parable of a man going from Jerusalem to Jericho. The lack of reference to the contrary leads me to conclude that he was a Jew. This man fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. The stage for world thinking on the genuineness of Religion becomes a wounded, helpless man, and the major inference in the parable is that Christianity, to be genuine, must meet the needs of the unfortunate people of the world, of the suffering and needy.

2. The second proof of the genuineness of our Christianity is whether it can transcend "class lines" and stand up against useless traditions.

Jesus, in this parable, says, "By chance, a certain priest came that way, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side." This priest represented not only the highest in the class system of his day, but the highest in the religious system. Perhaps tradition and his class distinction put him above menial tasks outside of the Temple, such as dealing with a wounded stranger. But Christ brings out in this parable that if you would have eternal life, or be a genuine Christian, you must ignore class lines and traditions if they stand in the way of Christian service to the man who is down.

3. The third point that Jesus emphasizes in this parable is that the test of genuine Christianity lies in whether it can express itself in service, rather than in mere sympathy. "And likewise, a Levite, when he was at the place came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." This Levite expressed the sympathy of a pause to look on him at least. Perhaps he went so far as to put his sympathy into words, but he did not put his *sympathy into deeds*.

4. The fourth test of the genuineness of Christianity set forth by Jesus in this parable is whether it can transcend race barriers. Race barriers could have been a stumbling block in the way of

service in this case, as it can always be a stumbling block in the way to eternal life.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, "Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

The wounded man was a Jew, and the Samaritan was of a race or nation of mixed blood, excluded from the Temple worship and society of the Jews because of their mixed blood. But Jesus brings these two people face to face in this parable to show what genuine Christianity must do. It must forget national lines, racial lines and class lines when confronted with human needs and Christian responsibility.

5. The fifth test of the genuineness of Christianity lies in whether or not we can forgive and be Christian toward those who have not been Christian toward us.

The Samaritan might have remembered wrongs done his people, if not to him, in the past. For the Jews had humiliated the Samaritans. He might have said, "He is not one of us; in his good days he did not bother us. Why bother him?" But Jesus teaches in this parable that unpleasant memories of the past must not be harbored. All wrongs must be forgiven. And the opportunity for service to humanity—yes, suffering humanity—must overshadow all wrongs of the past.

After Jesus tells the simple story, he makes the lawyer answer his own question by asking him, "Which do you think was neighbor to him?"

The lawyer answered, "He that showed mercy on him."

Jesus replied, "Go thou, and do likewise."

If we would have eternal life, if we would be genuinely Christian:

1. We must serve the fellow who is down or less fortunate than we are.
2. We must ignore class system and useless traditions when they stand in the way of Christian service.
3. We must express our religion in service rather than in empty words of sympathy.
4. We must follow our religious convictions across race lines, and help every soul possible, remembering that they are all our Heavenly Father's children, and that our soul's salvation depends upon our response to human needs.
5. The true test of genuine Christianity is whether we can forgive and be Christian toward those who have not been Christian toward us. The Christian motto must be *Do Good Unto All Men*.

My Grace Is Sufficient for Thee

And he said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

—II CORINTHIANS 12:9

THIS SCRIPTURE makes it very clear that the life of the Apostle Paul was not a pleasant bed of roses, but a life in which joys and sorrows, bitters and sweets, pleasure and pain were well mingled. This chapter opens with Paul stating the great spiritual joys that had come to him. But before going too far in relating his joys, he states that there was given him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure.

Paul behaved just like other people through the ages. He didn't want the thorn in the flesh, or the buffeting of Satan, and he prayed to the Lord three times that the thorn in the flesh might be removed from him. But God did not remove the thorn in the flesh, but said unto Paul in the language of the text: "My grace is sufficient for thee." There is difference of opinion as to what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. Some referred to it as a disease that embar-

rassed him. Whatever it was, it was a spoiler of the joys of life.

I bring this message hoping that people everywhere who are troubled by a thorn in the flesh, whatever that thorn may be, may realize that God does not always elect to remove our trouble, but his grace is sufficient to sustain us and bring us through trouble. In other words, he said to Paul, "It is sufficient for thee in thine affliction that thou hast my favor." Keep calm and bear your trouble. There are many people in hospitals this morning and on sickbeds, and some walking around with afflicted bodies, who need to realize that God's grace is sufficient to keep them in the hour of trouble.

It often takes trouble to prove what we are. I have seen a weed, called in my childhood Jimson weed, grow not very far from a rosebush. Both plants had flowers on them and from a distance looked pretty, as long as you didn't touch them. But touch the rosebush, bruise the petals of the rose, and you got a fragrance that was a joy to smell. Touch the Jimson weed, bruise it, and it gave off an obnoxious, sickening odor. So it is with men and women in the world today. Let trouble come to a man or woman who has not come under the influence of the grace of God and they give off a sickening odor that reveals what they are made of. But let trouble or affliction come to a man or woman who has come under the influence of the grace of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, and they give off a sweet fragrance that tells the world that God's grace is sufficient to keep his children in the hour of trouble.

An afflicted Paul wrote many epistles. Blind Helen Keller brightened the world with her contribution to religion; John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* in jail; and many present-day Christians are making beautiful contributions under great affliction. God's grace is sufficient for you and will help you keep sweet under affliction, if you allow it to do so.

The Growth of Man's Conception of God

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—II PETER 3:18

IT IS SAID that growth is one of the proofs of life. Every living thing must grow. Man has grown through the ages. When we study the history of man, we find that he has grown a long way from primitive man in transportation, communication, science and the many other things belonging to civilization. But man's marvelous growth has been in his conception of God.

Man instinctively believes there is a God. Where other forms of culture have not reached, men have their religions and their Gods. They may be false Gods, but they are their conception of God. This belief in God is as old as the human family. In Genesis, the fourth chapter, we find Cain and Abel making their offering unto the Lord.

While man has believed in God through the ages, he has not always had the same conception of God. Man's conception of God has varied through the ages. His conception of God can be seen in the arts, songs and literature of any age.

There are three clearly defined stages of the growth of man's conception of God:

1. God the Father and Creator, or the God in the Skies, or Heavens.
2. God the Son and Saviour, or God with us, or beside us.
3. God the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, or God within us.

The marvelous thing about this growth of man's conception of God is that none of the attributes, or powers, of God in the former stage of man's conception are lost; rather, they become more important in the growing conception.

1. We look to the Old Testament for man's first conception of

God. We do not find the Old Testament Scriptures putting emphasis on God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity belongs to a later age. To the men of the Old Testament period, God was the One God, the Creator of the world and stern ruler of man. He was known as *the God in the skies*, or in Heaven, who spoke in thunder and lightning, storms and earthquakes—a God that man dare not come too near, lest he be destroyed. He was a God of wrath who ordered Saul to destroy the Amalekites because they had made war on Israel four hundred years before the time of the order. To the men of the Old Testament period, God was a God of one race who smote all other races who dared oppose that race. If, by chance, He dwelled in some mountain, as some believed, only a privileged person could come into that mountain.

2. The second stage of growth of man's conception of God was ushered in by the birth of Christ. God came out of the skies, or Heaven, and became flesh and dwelt among men. He walked beside men and talked with them, as he did with the men on the road to Emmaus. He ate with the lowly and wept with Mary and Martha at their brother Lazarus' tomb. Yet he declared unto man, "My Father and I are One. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Through Jesus man's conception of God grew. He became God with man, or God beside man, to help him have life more abundantly—to assure him of food when hungry, water when thirsty and a home in Heaven at the end of life's journey.

The conception of God beside man did not destroy Him as the Creator of the World, the Ruler of Life, the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent Being. It only added love to these other attributes. Men said of Him, "Never a man spoke like this man," "What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" and the centurion cried out at the cross, "Surely this was the Son of God."

3. Jesus prepared man for the next stage of his conception of God. In John, the fourteenth chapter, verses 16 and 17, He states,

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. . . . For he dwelleth with you, *and shall be in you.*” I quote with emphasis “. . . and shall be in you.” This stage is the stage of God in man. Jesus states in John 15:26, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”

Jesus ordered his disciples to assemble in an upper room and prepare themselves and wait for this new stage of growth of their conception of God. On the day of Pentecost it came. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and their tongues gave forth His praise. God was dwelling in man. He was no less the Creator of the World, but they realized, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Man’s conception of God today is God within us, to guide us over the rough ways of life—to strengthen us in weakness, to comfort us in the hours of sickness and sorrow. When we need Him, He is not in some far-off sky, so that we have to holler to make Him hear. Just whisper a prayer . . . He is there within you. He knows your every care.

Prayer is the breath of God in man,
 Returning whence it came;
 Love is the sacred fire within,
 And prayer the rising flame.

It gives the burdened spirit ease,
 And soothes the troubled breast;
 Yields comfort to the mourners here,
 And to the weary rest.

When I try to fathom what the “God within me” conception means, I think of the egg, and of the caterpillar. The life is in the egg. The potential chicken is in the egg. It needs to grow, respond to outside stimuli; but the chicken does not come from outside the egg shell, but from within. Man’s spiritual growth must come from within. Hence we sing, “There is something within me I cannot

explain, that holdeth the reign. There is something within me.”

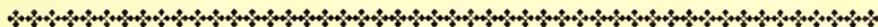
I know that man responds to outside stimuli—the church, school, good government, preaching, singing and all things of a cultural and spiritual nature—but there must be the God within. When one responds to the God within, one grows to the hatching stage. Or, like the caterpillar, when the life within develops to the proper stage, the caterpillar is turned into a butterfly. When man responds to the God within sufficiently well, he lays off this earthly body and becomes an angel.

The Christian's conception of God today is God is my Creator, God is my Saviour, God is my Comforter, Teacher and Guide, even until death. If you have not already become a Christian, will you pray?

HOLY SPIRIT, all divine,
Dwell within this heart of mine;
Cast down every idol throne,
Reign supreme and reign alone.

IV

*Sermon Preached at the 1960
General Conference of the A.M.E. Zion Church
(Buffalo, New York, May 8, 1960)*



The Assurance of the Presence of Almighty God

BISHOPS, GENERAL OFFICERS, DELEGATES AND FRIENDS:

Tonight I am greatly honored. But this honor brings to me mixed emotions.

I have been, perhaps, unduly conscious of my approach to my sixty-fifth birthday, one month from now, and the fact that I am completing my twentieth year as pastor of the great Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church at St. Louis, Missouri.

While I was meditating and trying to adjust myself to future possibilities, a letter came to me from Bishop W. J. Walls, notifying me that the General Conference Program Committee had selected me to preach the sermon tonight, and praying that "God would enable me to fill the task with splendor and glory."

The question flew into my mind, "Why, Lord, am I called upon at this particular time?" I began searching for a message, and my mind ran back to the time I was ordained an elder in the A.M.E. Zion Church in 1923—thirty-seven years ago, at which time Dr. William Harvey Goler preached the sermon from a text that has

stuck in my memory through the years. It has meant so much to me as I have traveled life's rugged road in the gospel ministry, with its ups and downs, that I feel an urge to preach it tonight.

I tried to look back across the years and get a picture of that ordination service thirty-seven years ago, with Dr. Goler standing there in tears part of the time. Bishop L. W. Kyles was presiding bishop. The late Bishop E. W. D. Jones was there as a candidate for the bishopric; also our own Bishop W. J. Walls, who was then editor of *The Star of Zion*; Dr. J. Francis Lee, editor of the Sunday-school literature; and a score of other notables who have since passed on to their eternal rest.

I felt the weight of my choice of a new church. For I was coming to the A.M.E. Zion Church from the Baptist Church, and giving up my ministry in that church and law practice and principalship of a school, and was fully conscious of what I had to face. But I believed in what I was doing. I chose to be appointed by a brother rather than being called by the people. I accepted gladly the encouragement of the sermon text "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

I pray that you may accept my message tonight somewhat as I accepted it then. The text is found in the book, Joshua, first chapter, fifth verse.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

My subject is *The Assurance of the Presence of Almighty God*. I invite you to study with me:

1. Joshua's plight when these words were spoken to him.
2. What the promise contained.

1. Joshua stood there a mature man able to think for himself. He had left Egypt with Moses and the Children of Israel and had been one of Moses' assistants. Joshua had commanded the Israelites in their successful conflict with the Amalekites at Rephidim. He had been a personal attendant on Moses on Mount Sinai when Moses had received the Ten Commandments. He had been a mem-

ber of the commission of twelve, known as the twelve spies, sent to report on the land of Canaan. He was one of the two who said, "We can possess it." Moses had publicly ordained Joshua to be his successor.

Joshua had known that sometime the load would fall on him, but when, he knew not. But at this time Moses had disappeared, and where he was the people knew not until the Lord came to Joshua and said: "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses."

Joshua reflected on the toils, the complaints of the people against their leader and hardships already suffered since leaving Egypt; and his heart was heavy. But God reminded him that he was not to face the task alone. He assured him, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

2. To know what to expect, Joshua had only to reflect on what God had been to Moses. Time will permit me to mention only a few of the things God had been to Moses.

God had been to Moses—

A Protector
A Provider
A Preserver

a) When Moses was born, he was sentenced by the Pharaoh to die. The Egyptian authorities had orders to throw all male babies born to Hebrew families into the river.

The Egyptian midwives were not employed at Moses' birth and his mother hid him until he was old enough to cry so loudly that it was difficult to hide him longer. When Moses' mother could hide him no longer, she placed him in a basket made to float and hid him in the River Nile, where the Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe. Moses' mother had left his sister to watch him from a distance, and to report the happenings to her. When the Pharaoh's

daughter found the baby in the basket, floating in the river, she was impressed with the child. Moses' sister came up to her and offered to find her a nurse for the child. The Pharaoh's daughter consented and Moses' sister brought his own mother as his nurse. When he was old enough, the Pharaoh's daughter took him to the palace as her own child.

God also protected Moses at the Red Sea. When Moses and the children had come to the Red Sea, they saw no way to cross it. The armies of Egypt were pursuing them. God caused the waters of the Red Sea to divide and leave a dry path for them to walk across. When they had crossed over, God caused the waters to come together again so that the armies of Egypt were destroyed.

God is promising to protect Joshua:

- (1) There is a Jordan to cross—but I will protect you.
- (2) There will be the battle of Ai—but I will protect you.
- (3) There will be the battle of Jericho—but I will protect you.

God is saying to us tonight: "There will be many dangers, toils and snares—but I will protect you."

b) God had been to Moses a Provider: (1) God made the bitter waters of Mira sweet so they could quench his thirst. (2) God sent manna, or bread from Heaven when they were hungry.

God is saying to Joshua: "I will provide for your needs." And God is saying to you and me tonight: "The way may be dark at times, but I will provide for your needs. I will make a way for you."

c) God was to Moses a Preserver. (The word also means Saviour.)

One day when Moses was 120 years old, God said unto him, "Come apart into the mountain of Nebo." Moses went alone this time. He had often been accompanied on his journeys into the mountain. One time Aaron and Hur went with him and held up his arms in prayer while Joshua successfully led the battle in the valley. On Mount Sinai, Joshua was with him. But this day Moses went alone. God met him and reminded him of his error in smiting

the rock when he had been commanded to speak to it. God told him that because of his errors, he should not enter into earthly Canaan, but told him to look at it. God knew that the weight of years and strenuous burden of leadership had upset his nerves. God allows for human frailties.

What I have wondered is, What kind of look or view did Moses take? Was it of human vision, with its limited horizon that can see only a limited number of miles, and see things as were there that day? Or did God call him into the mountain to reward him with the divine look, since he was through with this earthly life, just as He conferred divine favor in the burial of his body? If so, he could see from Dan to Beersheba—the entire length of the land—and could see its future. The scripture states that he saw an area of land that suggests supernatural vision; but what did he see of the future? I do not know the answer, but I do know what God saw, and what Moses might have seen, had he been blessed with supernatural or prophetic vision.

Perhaps as God looked at Canaan, He knew that what Moses saw was surface appearance, that Canaan was not all that it appeared to be to Moses. God knew that Canaan had to be fought for at the battle of Jericho and other places, and that even after Moses had conquered it, had he been permitted to do so, he would have had trouble satisfying the various tribes as to where each should be located. God knew that the earthly Canaan for which Moses hoped would be a land seething with rebellion and wars through the centuries to come. He knew it would be conquered by the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Romans, who ruled Canaan at the time of the birth of Christ fifteen hundred years later. He knew that in this very land Jesus would be born in a manger and crucified on a cross. He knew that the Jews would be dispersed throughout the world, and that 3,500 years later—as far down as 1960—the land would be a powder keg, with the Jews and Arabs at each other's throats. But God, in spite of Moses' faults and failures, would not deprive him of the privilege of entering Canaan without giving him something better; so instead of letting Moses

enter the earthly Canaan, for which he had struggled forty long years in the wilderness, God took his soul to the heavenly Canaan before age and trials caused him to make hopeless mistakes. There he could have all the joys he had hoped for a million times and more.

What proof have we that God took Moses to Heaven after reminding him of his errors? When Christ was on the Mount of Transfiguration, it was Elijah who went to heaven without dying and Moses who came back to talk with Christ.

God is saying to us tonight: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." Through these long years of toil, these words have meant much to me; I have prayed the words of the song "Stand by Me":

When the storms of life are raging, stand by me;
When the world is tossing me like a ship upon the sea,
Thou who rulest wind and water, stand by me.

Then I seem to hear Him say: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." And when I have prayed:

In the midst of faults and failures, stand by me;
When I do the best I can and my friends misunderstand
Thou who knowest all about me, stand by me . . .

I seem to get the answer: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

During these thirty-eight years I have seen my comrades grow old and pass on behind the curtain of death. Tonight I pray:

When I am growing old and feeble, stand by me;
When my life becomes a burden, and I am nearing
chilly Jordan,
O Thou "Lily of the Valley," stand by me.

My soul thrills as I hear him say: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee":

- (1) I will protect you.
- (2) I will provide for you.
- (3) I will preserve you and at last take you home to glory.

V

Sermon at an Annual Meeting of the National United Church Ushers Association of America, Inc. (St. Louis, Missouri)



Gratitude and Courage

GREETINGS: It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I humbly accept the distinct honor of preaching your Annual Sermon. I am conscious of the fact that to preach the Annual Sermon to a national church body in times like these is a mighty weighty and serious challenge—for we are meeting in the most challenging times our modern world has known. No man knows, when he goes to bed at night, what kind of a world he will wake up in . . . in the morning; nor has he normal assurance that he will wake up at all, for the threat of death by atomic destruction hangs over our heads.

Cuba challenges our existence and invites Russia to help her. The Congo premier has called upon Russia for help, and that means they challenge the Western world. There is unrest and grave danger in the Latin American nations, to say nothing of Japan and the Orient.

Our only hope as churchmen in the face of these problems and our own internal struggle for first-class citizenship for all Ameri-

cans is in God. I therefore call your attention to a noble Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in other years, faced a grave crisis, and attempt to show you how he met it.

Our text is—

He thanked God, and took courage.—Acts 28:15

Our subject is *Gratitude and Courage*.

As we assemble here this morning, let us pause briefly to cast our eyes backward and sum up the events of the past year with gratitude to our Heavenly Father, and take a definite glance into the future with renewed courage and a double determination.

A fitting sermon for this hour is found in Hymn 454 in the *A.M.E. Zion Hymnal*:

And are we yet alive,
And see each other's face?
Glory and praise to Jesus give
For His redeeming grace.

Preserved by power divine
To full salvation here,
Again in Jesus' praise we join,
And in His sight appear.

What troubles have we seen,
What conflicts have we passed,
Fighting without and fears within,
Since we assembled last.

But out of all, the Lord
Hath brought us by His love;
And still He doth His help afford,
And hides our life above.

Then let us make our boast
Of His redeeming power;
Which saves us to the uttermost,
Till we can sin no more.

Let us take up the cross
Till we the crown obtain,
And gladly reckon all things loss,
So we may Jesus gain.

The fitting text on which we base this Annual Sermon is lifted out of a scene in the life of the Apostle Paul.

The saintly, scholarly Apostle Paul, the powerful preacher of the gospel to the Gentiles, is now a prisoner and on his way to Rome after having been dragged through court after court by his own countrymen. He has finished the voyage that must be made by sea and is now making the journey that must be made on land. He has gone as far as Appii, where the Christians at Rome, who have long wanted to see him, have come out to meet him. Paul's heart is so overcome with this expression of gratitude that he falls upon his knees and thanks God. The text says, "He thanked God, and took courage."

1. Paul on the road to Rome can be contrasted with the Paul on the Damascus road.

a) On the Damascus road we see—

- (1) A Paul at the peak of success
- (2) Paul a ruler
- (3) A popular Paul

b) On the Road to Rome we see—

- (1) A Paul of many reverses
- (2) Paul, a prisoner in chains
- (3) Paul hated by the Jews
- (4) Paul, whose best good has been counted evil, for he had brought gifts to Jerusalem to present to the church, and was arrested in the temple for having brought with him the gentile who helped make possible the gifts

But thank God he was a child of God, with hope of a better life in a better world.

Paul might have thanked God for—

- a) Conversion
- b) Guiding him through trouble
- c) Hope in life to come
- d) Fellow sufferers

3. Let us notice this morning some things for which we might thank God.

a) As the hymn "And are we yet alive" suggests, we might thank God this morning for being alive, for many who were at the last session of this Annual Convention have gone to sleep, and hundreds all over the world have fallen victim to death by riot, pestilence and disease. We too might have been gone, but for the providence of an All-Wise God. We stand here this morning and cry out with the poet:

Preserved by power divine
To full salvation here,
Again in Jesus' praise we join,
And in His sight appear.

b) We might all thank God for having brought us over the troubles and hardships of the past year and say with the writer of my favorite hymn:

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come.
'Tis grace hath brought me safe this far,
And grace will lead me home.

(1) Some of us have lost relatives and friends and have felt like friendless beings in a troubled world.

(2) Some of us have been talked about and called everything but a child of God, because we were misunderstood by those we tried to help. How fitting are the words of the poet:

Misunderstood, we move along asunder;
Our paths grow wider as the seasons creep along the age;
We marvel and we wonder why life is life,
And then we fall asleep, misunderstood.

4. Paul not only thanked God; he took courage. Let us notice

some reasons for Paul's renewed courage. As Paul stood there in the presence of the persecuted saints, who had come through blood and tears to show their faith in God by defying the Roman Emperor and death to greet him, Paul had the assurance of knowing that he was not alone in his service to God and in his suffering.

a) Paul doubtless realized as never before that the saint who suffers for God is moving in heavenly company, for—

- (1) Daniel suffered in the lion's den
- (2) The Hebrew children in the fiery furnace
- (3) Elijah on Mount Carmel
- (4) John on Patmos
- (5) Jesus on the cross

b) I like to think Paul saw Jesus standing there, saying: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

c) He might have heard an echo from the heavenly world saying: "The saints in all this glorious war shall conquer though they die."

d) Paul realized that while suffering he was in fellowship with Jesus, and his soul might have joined the poet in saying, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone?"

e) Paul might have taken courage, because in his trouble he got a glimpse of the Paul of the heavenly road coming to the journey's end, and he said, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

5. Let us notice briefly some reasons why we might take courage this morning. Some of us have come over the longest part of our journey. We are nearing our heavenly home. We will soon lay our armor by and be crowned at last. For us the storm is passing over. The storm is almost over. Let joyful hearts cry out:

Courage, my soul, and let us journey on;
Tho' the night is dark it won't be very long;
Thanks be to God the morning light appears,
And the storm is passing over. Hallelujah!

Billows rolling high, and thunder shakes the ground,
Lightnings flash, and tempest all around;
Jesus walks the sea and calms the angry waves,
And the storm is passing over. Hallelujah!

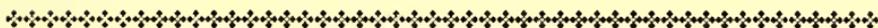
The stars have disappeared, and distant lights are dim;
My soul is filled with fears; the seas are breaking in;
I hear the Master cry, "Be not afraid, 'tis I,"
And the storm will soon be over. Hallelujah!

Soon we shall reach the distant, shining shore;
Free from all storms, we'll rest forevermore;
Safe within the veil, we'll furl the riven sail,
And the storms will all be over. Hallelujah!

Let us take courage because "when the storms of life are raging,
Jesus will stand by us."

VI

*Address Delivered Before the General Body
of the Sesquicentennial of The A.M.E.
Zion Church (New York City, 1946)*



Methodism, the Revitalization of Protestantism

IT IS A very distinct honor to appear on this program to address the members of the Sesquicentennial Celebration, and thus share in celebrating the 150th year of our existence as a denomination.

I have been assigned the subject "Methodism, the Revitalization of Protestantism." I am of the opinion that a wise approach to my task would be to discuss:

1. The birth of Protestantism and just what it meant to the religious life of the world
2. The decline of Protestantism as a spiritual force
3. Methodism, the revitalization of Protestantism

1. A study in our church history would show us the Roman Catholic Church at the time of Martin Luther functioning as a state, and selling indulgences to those who had sinned, and even offering to relieve the dead of the punishment of their sins. A definite Christian experience and a daily Christian life were not properly emphasized. Money was offered as a substitute both for

regeneration and for right living. This indulgence traffic was handled more like a material tax or fee than a spiritual penance. Many people of the Reformation, and of the years leading up to the period, had a strong desire for a spiritual life that could be felt and that would serve to regulate Christian conduct.

Martin Luther, who was born of poor parents, was educated as a lawyer and later turned to the priesthood, simply voiced the feeling of a spiritually hungry group when he spoke out against the rotten materialism of the Roman Catholic Church of his day. It was not the intention of Martin Luther to cast off his allegiance to the church; it was his desire to reform the church from within by protesting against the evils he so clearly saw; but his protest was regarded as a stab at papal authority and the pocketbooks of the Pope's agents who profited by the sale of indulgences.

Martin Luther's protest led not only to his excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church, but to the birth of the Protestant Church itself.

Protestantism not only voiced the fact that "the just shall live by faith," but declared itself for a heartfelt religion that would regulate human conduct. The Protestant movement sought to bring to the people a more enlightened doctrine and a purer life. The movement was from the prevalent dogmatic type of external piety to a religion that was more inward and spiritual.

Fisher, in his *Church History*, states, "It cannot be denied that Protestantism brought a revival of religious feeling among those who accepted it, and resulted, by a reactionary influence, in an awakening of religious zeal within the Roman Catholic Body itself." Further: "The Reformation did not attempt to build up a new religion, but to reform the old, according to its own authoritative standards. It is distinctly Christian, because it found its source and regulative principals in the Scriptures."

The Protestant Church swept with rapid speed over Northern Europe and England, and gave the people a refreshing touch of God's power, and a keen sense of nearness to Him.

2. Protestantism, like early Judaism and Roman Catholicism,

was soon to suffer from the material and formalistic touch, and to deteriorate from a live, spiritual force that moved the inner man to high thoughts and noble deeds, to a lifeless formalism that suffered its communicants to live the barest kinds of lives and to commit the foulest deeds, without any apparent pricking of conscience. To give you the picture more clearly, it is necessary for us to take a glance at England before and at the time of John Wesley and the great Methodist movement. I quote from Montgomery's *The Leading Facts of English History*.

But grand as were the military successes of the British arms, the reign of George II was morally torpid. With the exception of a few public men like Pitt, the majority of the Whig Party seemed animated by no higher motive than self-interest. It was an age whose want of faith, coarseness, and brutality were well portrayed by Hogarth's pencil and Fielding's pen.

For a long time intemperance had been steadily on the increase; strong drink had taken the place of beer, and every attempt to restrict the traffic was met at the elections by the popular cry, "No gin, no king." The London taverns were thronged day and night, and in the windows of those frequented by the lowest class, placards were exhibited with the tempting announcement, "Drunk for a penny; dead drunk for a twopence; clean straw for nothing." On the straw lay men and women in beastly helplessness.

Among the upper classes matters were hardly better. It was a common thing for great statesmen to drink at public dinners until one by one they slid out of their seats and disappeared under the table; and Robert Walpole, the late Prime Minister of England, said that when he was a young man his father would say to him as he poured out the wine, "Come, Robert, you shall drink twice while I drink once, for I will not permit the son in his sober senses to be witness of the intoxication of his father."

Such was the condition of England when a great religious revival began.

The church was torn by war between the High Church party and the Low Church party. There was strife between the bishops and the clergy. "The clergy who for a long time were estranged

from the bishops were, with not a few noble exceptions, ignorant and inert." The economic condition of the clergy had degraded it to a very low social standing. The clergy tempered its message to conform to the wishes of man rather than God. The preaching no longer stirred the emotions or exerted a renovating power in the bosom of society.

Such was the condition of England when Methodism was born.

3. Just as Protestantism had a revitalizing effect on the Roman Catholic Church, Methodism revitalized Protestantism. During this dark and sinful period in the life of England, a young man by the name of John Wesley came on the scene. He was educated and ordained to the priesthood, and sent to America to preach without having been converted; but after two years preaching in America, he returned to England and, the following May, was converted.

Wesley's conversion was aided by serious meditation caused by two questions asked him by a Moravian pastor while on his way to America. During a storm at sea, Wesley was very nervous, but the Moravian pastor was calm. This fear so disturbed Wesley that he asked the Moravian pastor some questions about his work. "My brother," said the Moravian pastor, "I must ask one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the spirit of God bear witness to your spirit that you are a child of God?" Wesley was so disturbed by these questions that he began a more serious quest for a vital spiritual experience. This quest resulted in his conversion at the meeting house in Aldersgate Street, London. At the time of his conversion, he was studying at Oxford. He and his brother, Charles, and a few others, one of whom was Whitfield, met so systematically for "devotional exercises" that their habits got for them the name Methodist.

A parallel in the lives of Luther and Wesley is seen in the fact that Wesley, at first, had no intention of separating from the Church of England, but labored only to quicken it to new life. Methodism, as the Wesley movement was known, caused a revival to sweep over England with great regenerating influence.

Whitfield, a younger member of Wesley's group, was instru-

mental in leading Wesley beyond the walls of buildings and causing him to begin open-air or field preaching. This field preaching, with great power, carried the gospel to the forgotten and neglected man. "Rough and hardened men were touched and melted to tears of repentance by the fervor of this Oxford graduate, whom neither threats nor ridicule could turn aside from his one great purpose of saving souls."

Unlike the church, Wesley did not ask the multitudes to come to him; he went to them. He rode on horseback from one end of the country to the other, making known the glad tidings of Christian hope. He would ride from forty to sixty miles a day. He read and wrote during his journey, and frequently preached four and five times a day.

He preached in fields under trees, which are still known throughout England by the expressive name "Gospel Oaks." He spoke in the abandoned mining pits of Cornwall, at the corners of the streets in cities, on the docks, in the slums—in fact, wherever he could find listening ears and responsive hearts.

If we except the Puritan movement of the seventeenth century, no such appeal had been heard since the days when Augustine and his band of monks set forth on their mission among the barbarian Saxons. The results matched their zeal, and the new religious spirit which stirred the people of England and America outweighed the growing commerce and prosperity of that day.

It is said by one writer of English history: "Methodism provoked the National Church to emulation of good works; it planted schools, checked intemperance, and brought into vigorous activity all that was best and bravest in a race that, when true to itself, is excelled by none." It has handed down to us a clearly organized system of beliefs embodied in our Articles of Religion, which we would all do well to read often. It has passed down to us the class system, and enjoined us to hold class meetings for the spiritual nurture of those entrusted to our care. It has set forth in the ritualistic service for the Lord's Supper the possibility of Christian erring and a call to constant self-examination and repentance.

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.

Wherefore ye that do *truly* and *earnestly* repent of your sins, and are in *love* and *charity* with your neighbors, and *intend to lead a new life*, following the commandments of God, and *walking from henceforth in his holy way*; draw near with faith, and take the holy Sacrament to your comfort; and devoutly kneeling, make your *humble confession* to Almighty God.

Thus we see Methodism the revitalization of Protestantism.

VIII

Other Special Sermons



The Christian's Consolation in Trouble

But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me,
I shall come forth as gold.—JOB 23:10

THE Book of Job deals with a subject that is as old as man, human suffering, and suggests that the righteous must suffer just like the wicked. The book presents an answer to the question that has baffled man through the ages: "Why must the righteous suffer?"

The fourteenth chapter of Job begins, "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." In the fifth chapter of Job, seventh verse, we read: "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

Trouble is the common lot of all mankind. All men will not experience greatness, riches, fame and great power, but all men alike will experience trouble. Trouble will come to the rich, the poor, the learned and unlearned, the good and bad alike. Our troubles may come from different sources and causes, but trouble will come.

To some, trouble will come in the loss of property; to others, it may come from the loss of friends; to others, it will come from

the loss of health; the trouble of others may be the invasion of death into the family circle.

Whatever the cause of our trouble, our souls need consolation in the hour of trouble. To what better source could we turn for this consolation than to God's Holy Word, and to the saint who drank the cup of trouble to its bitter dreg? Job had seen trouble in every form that mortals could experience trouble. He had seen trouble in his economic life, in his family life, in his social life and in his religious life.

Job had lived a righteous life filled with godly thrift; he had been a correct husband, father and family man in general. He had lived a life that was socially correct and had attempted to safeguard his reputation as well as his character. He had been a deeply religious man. The first verse of the first chapter of the book of Job reads: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."

Job had tried to carry his religion beyond the realm of personal righteousness, and to have it embrace his family and those around him, as is seen in verses 4 and 5 of this same chapter.

And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus did Job continually.

Let us study Job's life. Job's thrift is seen in the economic position he attained. Verse 3 of this chapter of Job reads: "His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East."

The second verse of the first chapter of Job gives us a picture of the size of Job's family; "And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters."

Such a beautifully planned life would be expected to bring to one corresponding happiness and joy; but not so with Job. For in verses 6 through 12, we get a picture of the beginning of the day of trouble, deep suffering and humiliation that came to Job, for causes unknown to him and for which he was not personally responsible.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

And the Lord said to Satan, "Whence comest thou?"

Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"

Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased. . . . But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

God commended Job to Satan, and Satan challenged Job's goodness, using the theory that Job's goodness was an attempt at compensating God for the riches and security given him. Satan's challenge was based upon his theory that a man could not be upright and perfect and fear God if he was poor and had to suffer the miseries, hardships and embarrassments that often go with poverty.

Job is referred to as the richest man of the East, and God said to Satan, "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man." So the richest man was the most perfect or righteous man on earth. But righteousness did not make him rich, neither

did riches make him righteous. Righteousness is quality of soul that is not too much affected by material things. If a righteous man gets wealth, he becomes a faithful steward in God's world, helping to make the world better. Riches do not make him less righteous, but give him a greater opportunity to promote righteousness.

God endeavored to establish the fact through Job that a righteous man can be righteous under bitterest handicaps and extreme poverty. So in verses 11 and 12, God permitted Satan to strip Job of his economic security; the only limitation was that Satan should not touch Job's body.

"But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

Satan set the stage for the trial of human endurance and suffering, and in verses 13 through 22 we read:

And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, "The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, "The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of

the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

When Satan failed to prove his theory that a poor man could not serve God as Job did, he attempted to advance another theory, challenging Job's righteousness. The second theory was that a man in ill health cannot be a perfect, upright, God-fearing man. Verses 1 through 6 of the second chapter state:

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

And the Lord said unto Satan, "From whence comest thou?"

And Satan answered the Lord, and said, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause."

And Satan answered the Lord, and said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."

A healthy body is a blessing, both to the person possessing it and the community around him, and everyone should try to keep his body healthy. When health is gone you see the blessing of health—but you cannot regain it fully, if at all. But God wanted Satan to know that a healthy body did not make Job righteous, nor would a sick body make him less righteous. So God permitted Satan so to touch Job's body that his health was gone from him,

and that he in pain, humiliation and shame should sit down among the ashes with running sores from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, and to take a piece of broken pottery to scrape the corruption from his sores. So humiliating and painful was Job's sickness that his own wife, in verse 9 of the second chapter, asked him to curse God and die, but Job answered, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job's friends chided him and told him that his disease was the result of a sin, thereby challenging his social correctness and religious sincerity. But Job answered: "My record is in heaven, and my witness is on high," and then he proceeded to give them the why of his affliction in the language of our text, "But he knoweth the way that I take: and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

1. In the hour of his trouble Job found consolation in his faith in *divine knowledge*—"He knoweth the way that I take."

There is consolation in knowing not only that God knows his children, but that He knows the road of life that they must travel: and that he knows just where they are on that road and the difficulties they are facing each hour of the day or night; and that if God does not elect to move the obstacle from their paths, ease their pain or brighten the dark hours, He does stand by to give them strength to overcome. The Apostle Paul prayed to God to remove the thorn in his flesh. God did not remove the thorn, but said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Christ said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." We sing with great consolation, "I love to think my Father knows the thorns I pluck with every rose." And we get comfort in knowing that it is the loving Father that watches over us in our affliction. The God who watches over the little sparrow watches over us with a loving eye and a sustaining hand, knowing just what we need in every hour of life, and he is willing to supply our every need.

2. Job found consolation in his belief in *a divine purpose*—
“when he hath tried me . . .”

Job saw, in the suffering of the saints, God's purpose or efforts to burn the impurities out of their lives. Every Christian is a saint in the making. “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” Trouble is a part of God's process in making a saint. He afflicteth not foolishly nor without purpose. We may not see God's purpose in our suffering, but it is there.

The words of Job, “when he hath tried me,” suggest the refining process of gold or such metals. Gold is a crude substance when it comes out of the earth, but the refiner places the crude substance in a mold in his furnace and heats it or burns it until the pure gold is separated from the useless materials with which it has been encumbered. So does God, the Great Refiner, place human souls in the furnace of trouble and affliction, and burn them until the sinful and useless things, traits, dispositions and desires are burned out of our lives and God, like the refiner, can see His image in us.

May we further illustrate the divine purpose in our affliction by calling attention to the ancient potter and his wheel? God reminded Israel, in the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah, that they were but clay in the Potter's hands.

The potter takes his clay and turns it on his wheel, using his finger, or sometimes his elbow, to shape the vessel he desires. Sometimes some rough element shows up in the clay to mar the vessel, and the potter has to tear the vessel down and make it over, or sometimes make another vessel, out of the same clay. The clay is not ruined because it is torn down; it is simply subject to the purpose of the potter, that it might be shaped into a proper useful vessel.

So does God sometimes find impurities in our lives that mar our usefulness. We are fortunate that God does not throw us away because of our imperfections: He tears us down, through affliction and great trouble, and makes us over, a thing of beauty, for the glory of God and the blessing of humanity.

3. Job got consolation in his belief in *a certain triumph*—"I shall come forth."

Job was determined that he would not go to pieces under trouble. It is unfortunate that some people do go to pieces under trouble and worry until they have destroyed their health, lost their mind and sometimes have gone as far as committing suicide. But not so with Job. He said to his wife, "I will not curse God and die." I will keep my faith in a divine pattern and trust the knowledge of God to be ever conscious of my condition. I will not lose faith in the divine purpose, but I will let God make of me the soul He wants me to be. And when God has satisfied His righteous purpose or plan, to the full satisfaction of His divine knowledge, I shall come forth. I shall come out of my trouble, a perfected saint, to give God glory.

The strength of any man's life in the hour of trouble is his faith in his ability to endure his suffering and to triumph in the end.

A cork stopper in a tub of water may be pushed down with the tip of your finger, but it will come back to the top. So it is with a man who will live right. You may press him down today, but he will rise up somewhere and carry on to the glory of God.

4. Job's consolation was in his faith in *ultimate perfection*—"I shall come forth as gold."

I am not now all I want to be, nor all that God wants me to be; but when God is through carrying me through the furnace of trouble, I shall be pure even as gold is pure. I shall be durable even as gold is durable. Some metals cannot be trusted to hold their own; they will canker and change their color under adverse conditions. But when God purifies a soul in His furnace of affliction, He removes from that soul all the elements that will canker, or prove disappointing under adverse conditions or trying circumstances.

It is the plan of God that all Christians come forth perfect souls for His eternal Kingdom. Let us yield our lives to Him.

May we close this message by giving you the reward of Job's patience and suffering, and his justification of his faith in divine

knowledge, divine purpose, final triumph, and ultimate perfection. (Job 42:12): "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses." This is twice as much property as he had before his suffering.

The thirteenth verse reads, "He had also seven sons and three daughters." This is the same number of children he had before his suffering.

The last verse in the Book of Job reads, "So Job died, being old and full of days."

Job's funeral oration might have stated that a happy old man died, having seen the glory of God and the fruits of yielding one's life to God's will and purpose, even though it be through suffering, and that a perfected soul went to his final rest, loved by his family, respected by his neighbors and approved by Almighty God.

The Church as the Good Samaritan Today

IN LUKE, the tenth chapter, Jesus faced the question of a lawyer. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Whatever this lawyer's motive was, he asked the intelligent, all-important question, and asked it in a definite, straightforward form, "What shall *I* do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answered the lawyer by referring him to the law with which he was familiar. "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer answered the letter of the law, but was cloudy on the spiritual interpretation.

The lawyer does not seem to raise any question as to the part of the law that requires him to *love God*. He does raise a question as to the part that requires him to *love his neighbor*. Jesus takes advantage of this fact to give the world the great truth that the

way to eternal life is not only through love for God but through satisfactory Christian relationship with man.

To make this truth most applicable to life situations, he takes a man of unknown background on the Jericho road who has fallen among thieves and robbers, and is in a helpless state, suffering and expected to die unless helped. Strangely enough, Jesus first brings the organized church in contact with a suffering, fallen man, who is down—suggesting that the measurement of Christianity is *how much we administer to the man who is down*.

Jesus does not discuss the man's faults or shortcomings that led him to his fallen state, for the thing Jesus seems to emphasize in this lesson is that the man who is down *creates* for the church *a responsibility that it cannot get around*. Future historians and critics of the church are likely to forget why the man was down and to emphasize their pleasure or disgust because of the type of response the church gave to the man's needs. The church cannot ignore the problem without soiling its garments and becoming ineffective and disrespected because it did nothing to help correct a wrong or relieve suffering.

Let us notice the three types of response that Christ pictured to this lawyer as a basis of the lawyer's decision as to which was worthy of eternal life.

The first representative of the organized church to be put on the spot by this man who was down was the priest, and he was too busy or too steeped in the convention of his day to recognize this man as his problem. So he passed by on the other side, perhaps saying in his heart, "That is not my problem."

There are many people who take that attitude toward relations and various race problems today. They feel that they have enough to do, and since they themselves are not the immediate robbers, they go on pastoring their churches, serving their immediate people or race, feeling that their skirts are clean—little realizing how much they are damning the church by ignoring the problems of the man, class or race who needs the church's help.

There is a second class of church folk with whom Jesus deals,

represented by the Levite. The Levite saw the man who was injured, came over to where the man was and conversed with him, but went away doing nothing about the man's suffering.

This can so easily represent the type of churchman who is interested in talking about race relations, who goes far enough to sit down and talk with people of minority groups about their problems, perhaps expresses sympathy, but who finally passes on to the other side and goes on his conventional way without doing anything about the problems of the fellow who is down.

Jesus discussed the third class and by inference held that class up as a class likely to live. It is a strange thing that he makes this man a Samaritan—a man who is not recognized by the organized church, and who would have never been known in history but for his noble deeds, but, who, because of his deeds, became the model for Christians and for workers in the field of race relations.

We have every reason to assume that the wounded man was a Jew: otherwise, I think the Scriptures would have so stated. The Samaritan was not a Jew, but of a people of mixed blood despised by the Jew. But he lifted himself to a high pinnacle in Christian history because *he crossed race lines* to solve human problems and help the fellow who needed his services. He ignored the possible criticism of his friends and the snubs of his enemies to administer to the unfortunate man of another race.

He overcame the physical difficulties that stood in the way of his Christian service by taking his own wine for the wounded man's refreshment, and his own oil for the wounded man's medicine to comfort his wounds, and a piece of his own garment to make the wounded man's bandages. He placed the wounded man on his own beast and carried him to a hotel—shall I say, his hotel?—and waited on the man himself. And when he had to go on his journey, he said to the innkeeper, "Take this, my money, and take care of the man. And if this is not enough, whatever it costs, I will pay the bill when I come again."

Jesus asked this lawyer the question, "Which one of these men was a neighbor to the man?"

The man answered, "The man that did something about the problem."

Jesus said to him, "If ye would have eternal life, go thou and do likewise," or do something about the problem of the less fortunate man.

If the organized church, as we know it, is to live and be respected by God and man, it must hear the voice of Jesus saying to it, "Go thou, and do something about these problems that affect race relations."

I shall name a few of them, but first let me remind you that anything that is unjust—any kind of injustice—breeds hate and antagonism that must be met at some time and in some way. Hate must be erased by Christian teaching and practice, or it will some day burst in a mighty storm along worldly patterns.

Some of the problems we could consider and do something about are—

1. Unjust or discriminatory laws on our state statute books that should be repealed.
2. Customs of segregation and discrimination that either have received the church's outright sanction or have been ignored by the church.
3. The practice of eliminating Negroes from legislating or governing bodies; which practice amounts in spirit to taxation without representation.
4. The lack of helpful and accurate material about Negroes in American textbooks and history.
5. The wicked propaganda carried on by the American press in playing up the evils of the Negro and playing down their good.
6. The evils of the Negro press in overemphasizing the abuses suffered by the Negro.
7. The exclusion of the Negro from or the segregation of the Negro in the church of Christ.

The Negro church can play down the tendency to become bitter because of the ill treatment the Negro suffers, while the white and Negro church can fight for the legal removal of all causes of hate. What shall our answer be, and what will the judgment of future

generations be upon us, when they consider what we did about race relations in this, our day?

Christianity, the Brotherhood of the Burning Heart

Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?—LUKE 24:32

Love the brotherhood.—I PETER 2:17

SOME PEOPLE speak of brotherhoods, unions and similar organizations today as if they were something new, a force that came on the scene to disrupt our "way of life" and to weaken our democracy in favor of some foreign power. A study of the history of mankind reveals that *there have been brotherhoods through the ages*—some in the form of secret orders, some otherwise. They may be good or bad, depending upon their objective and membership, but by and large the tendency to organize the human family is excellent and commendable, especially when organized for the good of the whole.

A brotherhood is an organization of men not related by birth or marriage, united for the purpose of promoting their spiritual welfare or ideals, or for the purpose of protecting themselves and their mutual interests and securing material or other benefits.

Brotherhoods have arisen out of man's consciousness of a need for self-protection or the protection of the society or ideals that he cherishes. I have in mind an organization that was in existence centuries before Christ, and there were many. The men of this brotherhood stated that they had organized so that their members might be able to identify themselves while traveling in strange lands, secure for themselves fair wages and be able to support their

families and help other needy persons who were related to members of their brotherhood.

The United States government was regarded in its infancy as a brotherhood born out of a great need for mutual defense and protection. The Preamble of our Constitution reads:

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The people of America were referred to as Brother Jonathan, just as John Bull was the name given the people of England. The name Brother Jonathan grew out of the incident in the life of George Washington, America's first President. When Washington took command of the New England forces in the Revolutionary War, they were short of arms and war equipment. Jonathan Trumbull, governor of Connecticut, was a man of good judgment. Washington stated, "Let's consult Brother Jonathan." This statement was so often repeated (according to *The National Encyclopedia*) that it came to be applied to the whole people. Other brotherhoods have grown out of deep reverence, or appreciation—among them the Franciscan Order or other orders in the Roman Catholic Church, and certain fraternal orders of our day.

It might be interesting to name some of the brotherhoods of the world. We could also name some brotherhoods within a brotherhood, but there is a danger of leaving out some that you consider more important than the ones I might name. And, too, I am simply leading up to the discussion of "The One Great Brotherhood," the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christianity is a brotherhood. It is a band of people with common beliefs, organized around certain ideals and teachings that are destined to lift the standards of living here, purify the life, save the souls of its followers and serve as the preserving salt that will save the world.

Christianity was born in a dark age of the world's history. Morals were at a low ebb; persecutions of subjugated peoples were severe. There was corruption in every walk of life, including the prevailing religions. The heathen temples were places of legalized prostitution in the name of religion. Women engaged in prostitution were taught that they were rendering service to their gods. A study of Judaism in the days of Hosea shows that his evil practice had crept into the Jewish Temple.

There were always men like the prophet Amos, who saw clearly the true moral and religious values and smarted under sinful practices and yearned for the true way of life—pure religion. There were the Isaiahs, Ezekiels, Jeremiahs and John the Baptists, who cried out against sin at the risk of their own lives, and yearned for the coming of a Saviour and the pure order of life. Christianity was the answer to their prayer.

Christ came to establish a new way of life. But he met formidable enemies in his birth. Herod sent out an edict to kill him as soon as he was born, and his parents had to flee into Egypt with him to save his life. The corrupt society of Christ's day hounded him all through his life and finally, when he was thirty-three years of age, succeeded in carrying out Herod's original intention to kill him.

The enemy tried to kill Christ's followers and stamp out the redeeming work he had started—the spiritual leaven that would leaven the corrupt world or purify it, and give the world a decent brotherhood of man. They tried to stamp out Christ's Kingdom that emphasized spiritual rather than material values—the Kingdom that Christ so often referred to when he declared: "My Kingdom is not of this world."

The followers of Christ were arrested, beaten, killed, scattered throughout the world. Fleeing death and persecution, they went into hiding in catacombs, or underground cemeteries. They faced the necessity of organizing or dying. They organized for their mutual protection, and used every possible means to identify themselves to each other without being discovered as believers by the

enemy. They had their secret signs by which they made themselves known as believers in Christ to each other without being detected by non-believers.

Lloyd Douglas, in his book *The Big Fisherman*, makes the chief sign the sign of a fish, drawn on the ground or posts or elsewhere. The sign of the fish was used because Simon Peter, the big fisherman, was the recognized leader of the band.

If the early Christians were to survive, they had to stand by each other; hence we get the admonition in Galatians, the sixth chapter, the tenth verse, "Do good unto all men, *especially unto those of the household of faith.*" Because one is a Christian he has a *right* to expect the good will and co-operation of all Christians. Because one is a Christian, one has a *duty* to show an interest in the welfare of other Christians. There must be unity among Christians. It is unthinkable that Masons or other orders should stand by each other more loyally than Christians do, especially while the Christian brotherhood is content to sing:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne,
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

Christianity needs close organization, or a oneness. Jesus saw this need of unity of believers and prayed in John 17:11, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou has given me, that they may be one, as we are."

Christianity as a brotherhood has its laws, as do all brotherhoods. But Christianity's laws are contained in the Bible and are

open to all the world. If any man will live up to the New Testament teachings, he is a Christian. Christ said in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." And in John 15:14 he said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Christianity as a brotherhood has a public and universally recognized symbol—the cross of Christ. The cross is displayed from church steeples, on walls, and is worn on chains and used in many various ways where Christianity is free from state or government persecution. It is the emblem of the world's great brotherhood, Christianity.

There are many things that distinguish Christianity, or the church, from other brotherhoods; chief among them is the mystical element. Men gain admission into other brotherhoods by being properly vouched for, passing examinations and going through initiations; but men must be *born* into the Christian Brotherhood.

Christ said to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, "Ye must be born again."

Nicodemus was puzzled and asked, "How can this be?"

Christ answered, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou heareth the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is everyone that is born of the spirit." Christ did not change the condition of admission in the Kingdom of God or the Christian Brotherhood: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" still stands.

Christianity as a brotherhood has a mystical note that is the actual personal experience of all members of the brotherhood—that of the burning heart. Hence, we shall deal with Christianity as the brotherhood of the burning heart.

The burning heart is an inward experience that defies rational explanation. We can testify to it, and there we must stop. We cannot explain; we can only tell the mysterious story of the burning heart.

Two men walking a quiet country road that led from the busy city of Jerusalem to Emmaus had an experience with the burning heart that gives us the inspiration for this message.

Jerusalem had been a city filled with excitement during the few

days preceding these men's experience. The feast of the Passover had been the occasion that had drawn people from all over the then known world to Jerusalem. Jesus Christ, who had attracted the attention of the leaders by his power to draw the masses about him and his ability to heal them, had been crucified, and reports had it that he had arisen the third day. The two men who walked this road were followers of Jesus and were living in constant fear that they too would be punished for having been his followers.

They were therefore relieved to be out of the maddening rush and imminent danger of Jerusalem and to be on their way to a quiet home in the sleepy little village of Emmaus. As these men walked this country road, their minds were still crowded with the startling events of the last few days, the arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of their Lord. It is only natural that these events were the topic of their conversation. How relieving it must have been to be able to discuss this matter fully, out on an open country road, far away from the ears of Pilate or any other authorities.

But while they talked, a stranger appeared, it seem out of nowhere, and they found that they were not alone as they had expected. This stranger asked them, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" One of the disciples asked this stranger, in downright amazement, if it was possible that he, as a stranger, had not heard the strange happenings that had stirred Jerusalem. This stranger, Jesus who had been crucified and had arisen, began to reason with the two disciples on the scripture, showing the need of his death and resurrection. As Jesus talked with them, their hearts began to burn within them.

When Jesus reached the gate of their little home, he acted as if he would go on by the house instead of stopping in. The disciples entreated Jesus to stop in with them (though they knew not that it was Jesus), saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." Jesus went into their home and sat at table with them for the evening meal, and when Jesus blessed the table, the disciples recognized him, and Jesus vanished.

The disciples marveled one to the other, saying, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He walked with us by the way?"

As we look back across the pages of religious history and review human experiences, it seems that the burning heart, experienced by the disciples on that day, was ever to be the true means of identity of the members of the great brotherhood that Jesus founded for the salvation of mankind. So pronounced has the sensation of a burning heart been in the experience of the believers in Jesus Christ, regardless of rank or station, that the humble, unlettered mothers and fathers of the Negro race commonly referred to religion as "a fire that burns from heart to heart and breast to breast."

The fire of the Holy Spirit that burns in the breast of men and characterizes the Christian brotherhood was perhaps experienced in its fullest extent on the day of Pentecost. The bewildered disciples had assembled in an upper room, in obedience to Jesus' command, to pray and await further developments. On the tenth day of their assembly, Peter arose and uttered many of the same words that Jesus had spoken to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Their hearts were strangely warmed, and a fire seemed to come down from heaven that so warmed them that every man gave God praise in his own tongue, though there were several nationalities assembled, and each understood the other in his own tongue. The burning heart so united men of different races and tongues that each felt himself a comfortable, understanding member of the great Brotherhood of the Burning Heart, the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John Wesley, an eminent scholar, a graduate of Oxford University in England, gives the clear testimony of the university man to the place of the burning heart in religious experience. Wesley had come to America as a missionary to preach without having that peculiar spiritual experience of having his heart burn within him. His ship was caught in a storm at sea, and in the raging storm it seemed that each wave would carry his ship to the bottom. Wesley was terrified. He looked into the face of a Moravian preacher on board, who faced the storm with such calm that

Wesley was puzzled. Wesley asked him how he could be so calm. The Moravian minister asked Wesley, "Brother Wesley, have you had a spiritual experience that makes you know that you are a child of God?"

This question so troubled Wesley that he returned to England, and engaged in fervent prayer until one day at Aldersgate something happened in his life. The only explanation Wesley could give of his experience was his statement, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." This burning of Wesley's heart revolutionized his whole life and work.

I cannot explain the burning heart, and I am not trying to go beyond the mere suggestion that it is the result of one's having made spiritual contact with the great spiritual current that rules life. I know that there must be a strange warming or burning of one's *heart*, that one cannot fully explain, to set one right with God, one's self, one's fellow man, and to bring out the best in one's life and one's work. This warming or burning of the heart serves as a uniting link between all members of the brotherhood of Christ, regardless of race, creed, color, rank or station in life.

This strange warming of the heart that John Wesley speaks of also gives one poise and assurance during the storms of life that are so certain to come. It gives us confidence when our lives are being tossed on the restless sea of life. Many a man has been saved from despair because he has the memory of this experience, and can say like Paul, in II Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Christianity is the brotherhood that leads to eternal life all followers who will be inducted into the Christian brotherhood and live up to its standards and teachings. But they must be properly inducted and live the life they profess.

There may be, in our churches today, persons masquerading under the Christian banner who have followed the church for years without being possessors of the experience of the burning heart, and who blunder in living the Christian life. Such persons are

commonly known as professors without being possessors of the dynamic experience.

Some such persons have followed the church so closely for years that in later years they came upon this spiritual experience and, having received it, have become confused, and accuse all Christians of having followed the church as mere professors without being possessors of religious experience. Hence they have given rise to an idea that there must be a second blessing in order to be saved or to live a beautiful Christian life. It is our belief that the Christian may experience spiritual showers as a result of prayer, consecration and Christian service. But if his heart has been truly warmed, these showers are just another experience in the continuous march toward perfection. The better one lives, the richer will be one's Christian experience.

In the Brotherhood of the Burning Heart men are supposed to make progress daily, just as men advance from degree to degree in other brotherhoods. Normal men, in brotherhoods that have degrees, are not supposed to spend all their lives in the first degree, no more than a child in our public school is supposed to stay in the first grade forever.

My forty-seven years of pastoral experience have led me to believe that far too many people stay in the first grade of Christianity far too many years without earning a promotion or showing signs of Christian growth. The Apostle Paul tells us to "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Men are supposed to so advance in Christianity, the Brotherhood of the Burning Heart, that one day they will be eligible for graduation from this earthly brotherhood to the heavenly brotherhood. Jesus expressed this desire in John 17:14,

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.

The Outstanding Tragedy of All Times

And they crucified him.—MATTHEW 27:35

TRAGEDY is one of the two forms of drama; the other form is comedy. In tragedy the outcome is failure and defeat. The essential characteristic of the world's great tragedies is the expression of the human will against obstacles.

Tragedy became popular on the Greek stage as early as 525 B.C., but seems to have reached a new peak in the later days of the Roman Empire. Since that day the stages of the world have been the scenes of great tragedies—whether the stage be that of the school, the church or the theater.

With the decline of the Roman theater came a long period of darkness in the history of drama. Then a new dramatic form arose, having its origin in the services of the church. The church's chief subject was, and is, the Tragedy of the Cross of Christ.

The peculiar thing about the subject of the church's tragedy is that it never grows old. I know of no other subject ever selected in the world's great drama that will draw the same crowd of people to the theater week after week for a period of ten years, without their growing tired of it or the subject growing old. But men have crowded churches for nearly twenty centuries to witness again the drama of the cross of Christ. And yet they sing today as never before the beautiful hymn:

In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the Cross forsake me;
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way,
From the Cross the radiance streaming
Adds more luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the Cross are sanctified;
Peace is there, that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

Let us study five great tragedies, and their effect on civilizations of centuries.

1. Let us go back to ancient Israel, during the period of the Judges, and study the tragedy of Jephthah and his daughter. Jephthah is listed among the illegitimates of the world who became great stars.

He was driven from home by his legally born brothers, only to be recalled when his people were in grave danger and needed a leader in battle. Jephthah would consent to return to his home and fight against the enemy only on the condition that he be their recognized leader, in peace as well as in war, if he was victorious in his effort.

Jephthah would not undertake so great a war, a war in which his own destiny hung in the balance, without consulting God and asking for God's help and guidance. In Jephthah's appeal to God for victory, he made God a conditional promise, or vow. He promised God that if He would go with him and give him victory and bring him safely home, he would offer to God as a sacrifice the first thing his eyes fell upon on his return home.

Jephthah was victorious in battle and came marching home with all of the joy, pomp and splendor of a victorious general of his day. But his joy was soon faded when the first thing that greeted him on his return was his beloved daughter, who ran out to meet him.

His daughter asked him why he was so sad, and he told her of his vow to offer up the first thing that he saw as a sacrifice. Realizing it meant either her death or breaking a vow to God, she urged her father to keep his vow after giving her a short time in the mountains to mourn her virginity.

At the appointed time, she returned to face death in keeping with her father's vow. The scene of her execution was rather tragic, inasmuch as she would not allow her face to be veiled, but preferred to watch the instrument as it ended her life, that the vow might be respected.

This was a great tragedy but not as great as the Tragedy of Calvary.

2. Let us look at a later period of Jewish history for our second tragedy, that of David and Jonathan, during the reign of King Saul. Jonathan was the son of King Saul, Israel's first king, and would have ordinarily been his father's successor to the throne of Israel, but there arose in Israel a young lad named David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse.

David had grown up a shepherd boy, fearing God and honoring his parents. One day he was sent by his father to the battle front to bring him word of his other sons. This was at the time that the Philistines were making war against Israel, and the mighty giant of the Philistine camp, Goliath, had challenged Israel to send a man over to fight a duel with him, to let the outcome of the duel determine the outcome of the war.

When no man in Israel dared answer the challenge, David, though just a country lad, begged for the chance to defend the armies of the living God. David took a sling and three pebbles, and went forth to meet the mighty giant, saying to Goliath, "Thou cometh to me with a sword and a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord."

David slew Goliath and the news of his victory rang through the world. Women greeted him on his return singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain tens of thousands." This

made Saul insanely jealous of David, and Saul began from that day forward to try to kill him.

It seems that Saul's son, Jonathan, should have also been jealous of David, since he was a direct threat to supplant him on the throne of Israel. But a great love proved stronger than selfish interest, and Jonathan befriended David to his death.

This was a great tragedy, but let us compare it with the Tragedy of Calvary.

3. Let us turn to ancient Syracuse for our third tragedy—the Tragedy of Damon and Pythias.

Pythias had been unjustly condemned to death by the tyrant ruler of Sicily. Pythias wanted to leave Syracuse to adjust his affairs at home before his death. But how could one condemned to die expect to be allowed to go home to tell a wife good-by and close up the affairs of his earthly life? But a friend, Damon, came forward and asked to take Pythias' place on death row as a pledge that he would return on the day fixed and meet his death.

Tradition has it that friends ridiculed Damon, saying that Pythias would not return, that the tyrant ruler would welcome the chance to show the folly of such friendship or trust in one condemned, by his court, to die.

On the day fixed for the execution, Pythias said good-by to his family and left home in time to meet his appointment with his executioners, but the horse on which he was riding became lame and he had to provide himself with another horse.

The hour of the execution drew near, and the prison guards brought Damon into the court. People began to chide him because his friend had not returned and he must die instead. But Damon said, "He will be here. Just look in the direction of his return." As the time of the execution approached they did look, and they saw a cloud of dust in the far distance, and finally a horse with a rider coming at full speed. They opened the gate and Pythias came riding in, jumped off his horse and threw his arms around Damon and thanked him and announced his readiness to die.

This scene so touched the tyrant's heart that he ordered that neither man should die. This was a great tragedy, but not to be compared with the Tragedy of Calvary.

4. For our next tragedy, let us go to the Senate Chamber in Rome on the Ides of March, during the first century before Christ. There we will find Julius Caesar, perhaps the greatest of Caesars, being assassinated by the senators. Caesar fought them bravely until he saw his most trusted friend, Brutus, stab him.

To be stabbed by one he loved broke Caesar's heart, and he cried, "Thou, too, Brutus!"

Certainly, this was a great tragedy, but it fades into insignificance before the Tragedy of Calvary.

5. Let us pass on the world's greatest tragedy—"The Tragedy of Calvary."

Jesus, the Son of God, had come into the world to save man from eternal death. He had lived his earthly life in glorious service, and many miracles which should have established his divinity had been corroborated by audible voices of God and angels. But in spite of all the divine proof of the genuineness of Jesus' redemptive ministry, the enemy had plotted his death.

To see Calvary better, let us look at the upper room and Gethsemane. It was at the time of the Jewish feast of the Passover that drew people from all over the world to Jerusalem. Jesus spoke to his disciples (Matthew 26:18-22):

And he said, "Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, 'The master saith, "My time is at hand: I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples."'"

And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, "Lord, is it I?"

At this time Jesus made known, with great sorrow, his betrayal and death. And from the upper room he made his way to Geth-

semane, the little olive grove outside the city of Jerusalem that has come to be known as the garden of sorrow.

When Jesus reached the gate of the garden, He left eight disciples at the gate, and took three—Peter, James and John—further into the garden with him (Judas having already left to betray him). Jesus left Peter, James and John and went further and fell on his face, having said to the three disciples, “Tarry ye here while I go and pray yonder.”

He fell on his face and prayed to his Father, “If it is thy will, let this cup pass from me.” Jesus prayed the third time and returned, to find his disciples still asleep. He aroused them from their slumber and went to the gate where the enemy had gathered to arrest him.

He was arrested and given a trial at a time and manner contrary to the law—a trial where mob hysteria ruled. He was condemned contrary to the findings of the trial judge. Pilate states, “I find no fault with this man.” He was led away to Calvary to be crucified.

Our text, Matthew 27:35, reads, “And they crucified him.” Jesus was led from Pilate’s judgment hall to Golgotha to be crucified by Roman soldiers. The curiosity-seeking crowd from all over the then known world that had gathered for the feast of the Passover followed the soldiers with their prisoners to Calvary.

Jesus, like other condemned prisoners, carried his cross on his shoulder until his physical strength gave way and he fell beneath the load. A visitor in the city, Simon of Cyrenne, was pressed into service and ordered to carry the cross of Jesus. When the procession reached Calvary, the soldiers nailed the hands and feet of Christ to the cross and waited for him to die a slow death in the bitterest of pain. Jesus finally cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and gave up the ghost.

To make sure that he was dead before taking him down from the cross, the soldiers thrust a sword in his side. What a bitter tragedy!

1. On Calvary, Jesus, an innocent man, died.

2. On Calvary, a friend died at the hands of persons he had come to save.

3. On Calvary, the person crucified was the Son of God.

4. On Calvary, men and angels were puzzled and the natural world was disorganized; the sun became dark in the middle of the day; the earth shook and many other strange things happened.

Let us notice the effect of these tragedies on man:

1. Out of the tragedy of Jephthah and his daughter, we get the order of the Eastern Star, which has done noble character-building work and endeavored to teach folk to respect an obligation or vow.

2. Out of the tragedy of Jonathan and David we get the Order of Odd Fellows, which has wrought well in building a better manhood.

3. Out of the tragedy of Damon and Pythias we get the Order of Knights of Pythias, which has done its noble work in helping build a better social order.

4. Out of the tragedy of Caesar and Brutus Shakespeare got inspiration for his play *Julius Caesar*, and the world is reminded of the hurt of a fatal blow struck by a trusted friend.

5. But out of the Tragedy of Calvary, came the glorious fact of the resurrection. Had Jesus not died, there would have been no resurrection of Christ. Thank God there is the fact of the resurrection!

Joseph begged for Jesus' body and buried it in his new tomb. Soldiers were stationed there to guard the tomb so that no one could steal the body away and say he had arisen. But something happened to the soldiers. They were knocked down by some mysterious power, and when they came to their senses, Jesus had arisen—the stone was rolled away, and Jesus was gone.

Wounded feet had not stopped him from going his way. The resurrection became the powerful mystery of the ages. Out of the Tragedy of Calvary—

1. The soul of the world was born anew. The church was born, the hope of the world's salvation. Other tragedies were the basis of

great reforms, but the Tragedy of Calvary is God's plan for the world's salvation and eternal happiness.

2. The Tragedy of Calvary saves from a low life of sin. Jesus died for sinners—that sinners might rise above sinning. However slow we are in attaining this goal, it is the ultimate goal of all Christians.

3. The Tragedy of Calvary saves *from* hell. But it is not enough to be saved from hell and left here in eternal misery:

4. For the Tragedy of Calvary saves *for* heaven. John saw the saving effect of the Tragedy of Calvary and gave us this glorious picture in the seventh chapter of the Revelation. He saw the redeemed coming up from the twelve tribes, or one hundred and forty-four thousand, and in verses 9, 10, 13 through 17; he states that he saw a number that no man could number.

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." . . .

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"

And I said unto him, "Sir, thou knowest."

And he said to me, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Miscarried Plans of Life

My days are past, my purposes are broken off.—JOB 17:11

WHEN WE study the entire Book of Job we find many outstanding truths, but for this message, we wish to center our thoughts on a few truths that portray

1. A planned life.
2. The miscarriage of life's plans.
3. The ultimate success of the life built on faith in God, or with a spiritual plan that is not neglected.

1. If one is to gather any outstanding truth from reading the early chapters of the Book of Job, that truth would be that Job's life was a *well-planned* life. (a) The very first verse of the first chapter tells us that Job was a perfect and upright man and that he feared God and hated evil—and this suggests a spiritual plan. (b) The second verse tells us that he had a family of seven sons and three daughters, and the fifth verse states that he offered sacrifices for his children, lest they sin—and this suggests plans for a good domestic or home life. (c) The third verse tells us "His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East." This suggests that his life had an economic plan or pattern. And (d) throughout the entire Book of Job we note that Job was careful about his good reputation—about what people thought about him—and this suggests that Job had a social plan for his life.

To sum up the pattern or plan of Job's life, we find:

- a) A spiritual or religious pattern
- b) A domestic or family pattern
- c) An economic pattern

- d) A social pattern, or a plan to stand well in the sight of men as well as in the sight of God

The plan of Job's life ought to suggest much to people of our day, for no man can be safe or happy who has not included God, or a spiritual life, in the plan of his life. Matthew 6:33 gives us a definite admonition of Christ on this point: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

A study of Job's second plan reveals that he was not afraid to attempt to rear a family. He had seven sons and three daughters. He planned their spiritual lives so carefully that when they had given feasts at their homes for each other, Job sent for them and offered burnt offerings for each of them for fear that one of them had sinned.

A study of Job's life reveals that he was not unmindful of economic needs. He was a rich man and at the same time a good man. I have no patience with those who hold that one must be poor to be good.

We would do well to note that Job had his friends and his wife, who showed concern about his reputation, and Job was careful about his association with them and the opinions they formed about his goodness. Every man ought to plan to have a good reputation and have his fellow man have faith in his integrity.

When I hear one say, "I don't care what people think about me," I feel that they have misinterpreted the spirit and meaning of Christianity, for Christ admonishes us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:16), "Let your light so shine before *men*, that *they* may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

2. The second major thought that a careful study of the Book of Job brings us is that however carefully we plan our lives, there will somewhere appear *a miscarriage of our plans, or pattern of life*. There must be ups and downs, joys and sorrows, successes and disappointments.

I further suggest that the disappointments or miscarriage of our

plans are not always chargeable to us directly, but are often chargeable to society or the world about us.

Job, the first chapter, sixth through the twelfth verses states:

. . . when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord . . . Satan came also among them. . . .

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?"

Satan answered the Lord, and said, "Doth Job *fear* God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

And the Lord said unto Satan, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

From that day forward, Job's well-planned life began to fall apart, and his plans began to miscarry, by no fault of Job's, as revealed in the scripture.

The first plan to miscarry was Job's economic plan. His fortune was suddenly and wrongfully taken from him, and he was left a poor man.

Before recovering from the shock of the miscarriage of his economic plans, a messenger informed him that all his children were dead, that their deaths were caused by a storm, wind from the wilderness that smote the house in which they were eating and drinking and wiped out Job's beautiful family in the twinkling of an eye, by no fault of Job's.

The next plan to be shattered was his social plan, or his good reputation. When Job had not sinned and cursed God because of the loss of his property and his children, but instead had said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord again, and Satan came also. God reminded Satan of the affliction he had placed upon Job, and Job still served Him.

This time Satan answered God, saying, "Job still has his health. What will a man not give for his health? Touch his body and he will curse you to your face."

God permitted Satan to touch Job's body with a loathsome disease, causing him to break out in sores from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet—not because of any sin Job had committed or wrong he had done. Job's friends would not come near him, but sat at a distance and accused him, saying his disease was the result of his sin. Job's wife said, "Job, curse God and die."

Job saw his reputation and social position gone in a brief moment by no fault of his, and could only answer: "My record is in Heaven, and my witnesses on high."

A study of Job's life reveals that there was one item in Job's plan that did not miscarry; that was Job's spiritual life, his faith in God. This faith in God was a staff on which he could lean in bitter hours of trouble and trials, and state, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." When Job's material plans had all miscarried, Job could get comfort from his certainty of a correct spiritual life, as he did when he stated: "But he knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10).

A study of the Book of Job suggests that we cannot keep our domestic plans from going on the rocks, our economic plans from going up in smoke, our social plans from soaring away from us on some contrary wind, but every man can hold fast to his spiritual plan, his faith in God, and no man can take it from him unless he himself permits it.

3. A study of the Book of Job also reveals the ultimate success of a man's life planned on God, when that man will not relinquish his faith through the darkest night or bitterest trials, for the closing chapter of the Book of Job, tenth verse, tells us the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. The twelfth verse says that the Lord blessed the latter days of Job's life rather than the beginning, and the thirteenth verse states he had also seven sons and three daughters.

May I sum up this message—

- a) By pleading for a well-planned life.
- b) By suggesting that when temporary miscarriage of life's plans come upon us, we anchor in faith in God until the storm blows over.
- c) By assuring you that God will reward the honest child of faith by permitting him to realize the completion of his planned life as an ultimate result of true faith and piety.

O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind: We humbly beseech Thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that Thou wouldst be pleased to make Thy ways known unto them, Thy saving health unto all nations. More especially we pray for Thy holy church universal; that it may be so guided and governed by Thy good Spirit that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

Finally, we commend to Thy fatherly goodness all those who are in any way afflicted or distressed in mind, body or estate, that it may please Thee to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities; giving them patience under their suffering, and a happy issue out of all their affliction, and this we ask for Jesus Christ's sake. AMEN.

The Call From Beaten Paths

. . . and we compassed Mount Seir many days. And the Lord spake unto me, saying, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward."—DEUTERONOMY 2:1-3

MOSES had led the Israelites on their wilderness journey through many dark and trying circumstances. The journey was fraught with many dangers, surprises and great difficulties, and took them through the wilderness, where there were no highways.

The Israelites had come in their journey down to Mount Seir, where they found good pasture land, good springs at the foot of the mountain and a reasonable degree of safety and security. So they circled the mountain for many days, willing to stay there in the contentment of their new-found security. But this was not the will of God, for their goal was Canaan, not Mount Seir. So the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto the people through Moses, saying, "Ye have circled this mountain long enough."

The early American settlers, the forefathers of our country, were like the children of Israel in that they started on a definite journey, searching after religious liberty, not after gold. Patrick Henry's cry, "Give me liberty or give me death," was voicing what the fathers had felt when they had faced the rigors of a wilderness life in America, dying of cold, hunger and the treacherous warfare of Indians. Those who died felt that they were dying for the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

We, the American people, have reached our Mount Seir, where we have found many attractive substitutes for the real thing that led our forefathers to suffer and die. And in our new-found security the glitter of gold, the fascination of power, material advancement, have quenched our thirst for God and deep spiritual values; and like Israel we have been circling material mountains, feeling security and contentment in things.

God is saying to America today, "Ye have circled this mountain of material things long enough; place more emphasis on the attainment of spiritual values."

I would not have us feel that we have traveled in a circle along all lines, or that we have not made some progress in every field; but I would have us examine our status and see if our progress along the line of spiritual ventures and attainments is in any way comparable with our material progress.

1. Let us notice some fields in which we have not traveled in a circle but have made very definite progress.

a) Our progress in scientific advancement has been astonishing. If the settlers who died as late as 1790 could come back today,

they would be astonished at the telephone system that links the people of the backwoods and the cities into one great family stretching across the mountains and plains of our great country, able to communicate with each other at will.

b) They would marvel at the perfection of our telegraph and would look upon the radio as a mystifying, unbelievable and perhaps shocking feat, when by simply turning a dial they could bring the voice of one speaking in England to their own fireside.

c) They would find, to their amazement, that medical science had found a name for nearly every ill of the human body and in most cases has perfected a cure. They would find some doctors so skilled that they can operate on the human heart, as well as practice preventive medicine by the use of countless vaccines.

d) We have not traveled in a circle when it comes to the matter of transportation. The story of the walking or oxcart age or even the horse-and-buggy age seems like a weird tale when we notice the speed of the glittering automobiles that dash over the highways from ocean to ocean.

e) We have gone forward in transportation by building hard-surface roads throughout the nation.

f) How interesting it is to go into Ford's Greenwich Village, in Detroit, and study the early trains of the first period of our railroad age; but think how interesting it would be to the early settlers, who had no trains, if they could behold our most modern trains today.

g) If the *Mayflower* could be placed beside our most modern ocean liner, we would get a striking example of our material progress in the matter of ocean transportation. And it is simply startling to think of our airplane transportation making remote cities on different continents just a day's journey apart.

h) We have gone forward in the matter of housing. The colonial homes are an interesting study in the light of our new housing program. Our skyscrapers, factories, government buildings, school and college buildings, and church cathedrals show an astounding degree of progress.

i) We have gone forward in the matter of educational facilities. Not only have we certified teachers in all our schools, but we have fine systems of grade schools, high schools, colleges, industrial and business schools and universities throughout the land. Every American child has a chance to know, to get an education.

j) We have gone forward in the matter of economics. America is a land of plenty. Through scientific methods we have learned to purify the dirty river water so that we can place pure water in every home, to take the place of the colonial spring. And we have plenty of food preserved by modern methods, so that there are no longer seasonal foods. A man can have a balanced diet the year round.

k) We have plenty of clothes in any desired style. We have organized wheels of industry and a universal exchange of needed products.

I repeat, we have made marvelous material progress; but I am raising the question as to whether or not our satisfaction with our material selves has not led us to forget and neglect our spiritual selves.

2. Let us notice some matters in which I feel we have traveled in a circle, or have not made progress comparable to the advancement in the other fields. Our development of *man*, of *God-like man*, has not kept pace with the development of our buildings. The spirit of universal Christian brotherhood has not grown to so astounding a degree as have our buildings and other things.

A poet was asked on the streets one day, "How are you?"

He replied, "I'm all right, but this tenement in which I live is almost gone." It is the man who lives within this building about which I am so deeply concerned. I fear our buildings have received more care than our souls.

There is a vast difference between Lincoln's log-cabin school and the school building of today. *But are the souls we are producing in these buildings today as much greater than Lincoln's or those of other men of log-cabin days?*

The Christians of the early days of American life worshiped in

little gunshot churches, while those of today have great cathedrals, but are we more Christian today than they were? We have grown in systems and methods of religion, but have we grown in religion itself?

Isn't it a sad indictment that with all of our material advancement we still cannot keep from having periodic war? In this we are doing the same thing that men have done since creation, but are doing it in a more brutal way.

Isn't it a sad fact that we have not grown to the extent that we can avert strikes and walkouts or the need for such practices, while the government faces danger and our soldiers face death for the want of materials?

Isn't the unrest and dissention throughout the world a challenge to our spiritual selves? The Christian religion concerns itself with the relation of man to man as well as the relation of man to God.

Are we not circling in the matter of race relations?

Are we more genuinely Christian in our attitudes toward each other than our fathers were?

Are we fighting more for justice and fair play and equal opportunities for all than our fathers did? Or are we in the traditional beaten paths of our forefathers, afraid for conventions, lest we be frowned upon for being Christian toward our fellow man?

Do the cry for human brotherhood, and the call of Jesus to a Christian life, drown the cry for national, race and class hate? Or are we, in this matter, just where our fathers were?

God expects us to go forward. It is not enough to be as good as our fathers were; we must use our opportunities and additional educational light to go farther toward God and universal brotherhood, or we have failed.

Let not our traditional and material things become an end in themselves, but let us follow God and use them as a means to an end. Let that end be a world of God-like men who have gone forward with God, men whose lives are built according to God's plan.

I close with the words of Josiah Gilbert Holland:

God give us men! A time like this demands strong minds,
Great hearts, true faith and ready hands;
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie;
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And damn his treacherous flatteries without winking!
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog
In public duty, and in private thinking;
For while the rabble, with their thumb-worn creeds,
Their large professions and their little deeds,
Mingle in selfish strife, lo! Freedom weeps.
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps.

Keeping the Fire Burning

The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.—LEVITICUS 6:13

IN THE CITY OF Paris there is a plain slab marking the tomb of the unknown soldier of France. In the slab a tiny flame burns constantly. The eternal flame symbolizes the perpetual devotion of the Republic to the memory of the vast company who died that France and her ideals might live. Throughout the ages, the ever-burning fire will be a symbol of those intangible things which the human heart insists should never be extinguished.

In Greenwich Village in Detroit, Michigan, there is an old courthouse in which Lincoln practiced law. This building contains the chair in which he was assassinated, and many relics; but the most gripping memory I have of the building is the log fire that burns in a large fireplace that, I am told, never goes out, but burns as a perpetual memorial to Lincoln's great ideals.

In Thomas Edison's laboratory there is a stove in which the fire never goes out, in memory of Edison's contribution.

In the ancient director of public worship for the Jews in Palestine, the Book of Leviticus, there is a specific instruction concerning the fire on the altar. "The fire shall ever be burning on the altar; it shall never go out." This fire was for the purpose of burning the sacrifice brought by penitent and anxious souls who wanted to stay in peace with God. Matches had not been invented, and fire was hard to start, once it had gone out, and religious service would be greatly delayed. Hence the instruction, "The fire shall never go out."

There is much in this lesson for us today, for a Temple without fire was useless and could not function. *A church without fire is a useless, dead thing.*

The fire must be on the altar, or in the proper place serving its proper purpose. The function of the fire was to consume the sacrifice, or to burn the sin out of the lives of the people. (1) The church must always have sufficient fire to burn the sin out of the lives of its communicants. (2) The function of fire was further to purify the lives of the believers. (3) It was to console, comfort and inspire all who came with heavy hearts to the Temple of God. "The fire shall never go out."

1. Let us notice the fire that must ever burn on the altar in God's church today and must never go out. The first is the fire of faith.

a) "The just shall live by faith."

b) It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his redemptive power that makes the penitent sinner lying at hell's dark door take his first step toward God.

c) It is this fire of faith that makes him cry, "Lord, I believe"; and as a result of his belief, the *joy of Heaven comes trickling down in his soul.*

d) This fire of faith is needed all along life's pilgrim journey. No wonder the poet cries:

Oh, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe!

That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God;

A faith that *shines* more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt;

That bears, *unmoved*, the world's dread frown,
Nor heeds its scornful smile;
That seas of trouble cannot drown,
Nor Satan's arts beguile;

A faith that *keeps the narrow way*
Till life's last hour is fled,
And with a pure and heavenly ray
Illumes a dying bed.

Lord, give us such a faith as this,
And then, *whate'er* may come,
We'll taste, e'en here, the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.

Some things dim the fire of faith—confusion, bickering dissension. The need of the church today is to keep the fire of faith burning, that we might ever cry, "Faith of our fathers, living still, in spite of dungeon fire and sword."

2. The second fire we need to keep burning in the church today is the fire of devotion. The mothers and fathers called it:

- a) That fire that moves from heart to heart, and breast to breast
- b) That fire that burned hatred and confusion out of their lives and made them love one another

- c) That fire that put a song in their souls and a shout on their lips
- d) That fire that made them cry, as one:

I love thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of thine abode,
The church our blest Redeemer saved
With his own precious blood.

I love thy Church, O God!
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.

This flame of devotion is made brighter in class meetings.

3. The third fire that we need to keep burning in the church today is the fire of love. "The love of Christ," says the Apostle Paul, "constraineth us."

- a) The fire of love draws us one to another.
- b) The fire of love draws us to our church.
- c) The fire of love draws us to God.
- d) The fire of love draws sinners into the church.

e) The fire of love keeps the enemy far away. (For the old hunter will lie down and sleep after he has lighted his fire about him, for he knows the wild animals will not come about him.)

The reason the devil gets into the church is that we let the fire of love go out. The devil is afraid of spiritual fire. "The fire shall not go out."

4. The next fire that the church must keep burning is the fire

of hope. I saw a statement on a church bulletin board: "If you keep your face to the light, your shadow will fall behind you." Hope is keeping your face to the light: that warmth in our hearts that keeps us looking ahead, realizing that the reward of a Christian is certain. It made Job say, "I know." It made Paul say, "I know." It made John say, "We shall be like him."

5. The final fire that must not go out is the fire of spiritual enthusiasm. Isaiah gives us the picture of this enthusiasm in the thirty-fifth chapter, tenth verse, when he says, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

God's church should be an enthusiastic band. The fire that burns within the soul should find the expression without. You cannot keep fire from burning its way out.

The psalmist says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord *say so*." And the poet in hymn no. 720 said:

Children of the Heavenly King,
As we journey let us *sing*;
Sing our Saviour's worthy praise,
Glorious in his works and ways.

We are traveling home to God,
In the way our fathers trod;
They are happy now, and we
Soon their happiness shall see.

If the fire burns in your heart this morning, you need not fear death, for as in the sixth stanza you can cry, in the hour of death:

Lord, *obediently* we'll go,
Gladly leaving all below;
Only thou our Leader be,
And we still will follow Thee.

The Christian Home

What have they seen in thine house?—II KINGS 20:15

THE BABYLONIAN representatives came to Hezekiah, after which Isaiah asked King Hezekiah that question.

Tell me who comes to your house, just who your visitors are, the friends you entertain. Give me a small idea of your conversations, the books you read, the records you play, and I will tell you what your home is like—what you and your children are today, what you were yesterday or in the past and what the destiny of you and your children will be in the future.

Napoleon was asked, "What is the greatest need of France?" His answer was "Mothers." If I were asked today what is the greatest need of America, my answer would have to be not more churches, not more schools, not more money, not more jobs; the greatest need of America today is *Christian homes*.

As I look back over the years of my life, my most blessed memory is a Christian home—

1. Where I got my ideals, my first *conception of right and wrong*, my first love and reverence for God;
2. Where we gathered around the fireplace, were made to get on our knees before going to bed and say our prayers, often kneeling at our mother's knee (it is a pity for mothers to be dancing and rambling when children should be kneeling at their knees);
3. Where we gathered around the old family Bible, and heard Mother read the scripture lesson, and Father pray the family prayer.

The most blessed memory any child can have is the memory of a Christian home.

1. *God started the nation in the home.* Home is the oldest organization on earth. When God called Abraham to organize a

new nation, he organized it around the home life of Abraham.

a) That home was built on the reverence of the One True God. I saw a wall placard: "Christ is the unseen guest in this home; the listener to every conversation."

b) That home was built on a love for peace. When strife arose between the servants of Lot and Abraham, Abraham put peace at home above wealth, ease or comfort—above the company and association of his nephew Lot—and uttered the famous words, "Let there be no strife between us, for we be brethren." And he told Lot to choose which way he would go. For Abraham knew that the true home must be built on peace, not on confusion.

2. Home is a training school for eternity. Home is not a show-place for fine furniture, fine carpets, etc. Put the character of your children first. But home *is* a training school for eternity, where folks are taught to live and revere God, and are started on the right road to soul's peace. The church, the state, the school, all indicate the type of home life from which our people come.

3. Young people, you can do much to make or break homes. Hence you have the responsibility in fitting into a well-organized Christian life; or you can bring into the home from the outside the disease germs of sin and confusion that will infect the other members of the family, and make it hard for Mother and Father to build a Christian home.

a) The two mightiest agencies in the Christian home are first, the mother, second, the father. The mother's Christian life is worth more to the child than a million dollars she might be able to leave to the child; for a child with a million dollars, without the true conception of God and religion, will likely live a miserable life, and die a pauper, at least in spirit.

A millionaire was dying without Christ and asked a Christian friend who was visiting him to sing something. The friend asked, "What shall I sing?" The millionaire said, "Come ye sinner, poor and needy." With all of his millions, he could not buy passage across the Jordan of Death.

b) Four things every mother must understand:

- (1) She must be a *Christian* to be a good mother.
- (2) She must be *consistent* to be a good mother.
- (3) She must be *prayerful* to be a good mother.
- (4) She must *read the Bible* to be a good mother.

c) I would not be faithful to my task if I neglected to discuss the father's responsibility in a Christian home. The father, from time immemorial, has been the *priest* of his household; which means:

- (1) The priest, or father, must himself be a Christian.
- (2) He must realize that the children are likely to grow up wanting to be like their father.

The child walking in his father's footsteps in the snow cried in dismay, "Walk straight, Daddy. I'm trying to walk in your footsteps."

I close this message as I began, by asking you a question from the Bible: "What have they seen in thine house?"

Have they seen you go to Sunday school?

Have they seen you go to class meeting?

Have they seen you go to church?

Have they seen you join the church?

Have they seen you live a Christian life at home?

Eternal Life and How It Is Obtained

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

—LUKE 10:25

IN THE natural world men are interested in life and look with a degree of gloom upon death. The intelligent, sane man thinks with joy and holy anticipation on eternal life and shudders with horror

when he thinks of eternal death. So we have in our scripture lesson this morning a lawyer who came to Jesus wanting to know, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life." I want us this morning to think about eternal life and how it is obtained.

1. Eternal life is the opposite of eternal death, and to better understand eternal life, we need to study eternal death.

a) Eternal death is eternal separation from God; for *God is Life*, and anybody in communion with God has life, and nobody who is not in touch with God has life.

b) Eternal death is *deprivation* of all good and happiness.

c) Eternal death is a *loss of all hope*.

(1) The biological proof of life is that a thing *moves* and *grows*, among the three other proofs. As long as a person is living, or hope is alive in his breast, however *depraved* his condition or *pitiful* his state, he can get some consolation from saying, "I hope I can move up. *I believe it is better farther on*. As long as one really lives, there is growth, and however small one may be, one is strengthened by a *flame of hope* that says, "I hope I can grow." Many a soul has come from a one-room country shack and gone to fame, because hope said, "You can grow."

(2) It is true of churches. *You can't stop a church that wants to grow*.

I have a burning desire to see this church keep up or, shall I say, keep ahead in this postwar crisis. It is going to take time to reach our goal, but it is my job to stay in touch with God, and furnish you the program.

May I state this morning that I shall never be satisfied until there are adequate facilities for youth, and a twenty-room parsonage, counting the basement rooms, turned into an old folk's home, and smaller quarters provided elsewhere for the minister. I don't believe the minister ought to live in sixteen rooms while many of his members with large families live in two or three rooms.

To readjust all of the inequities of the world's social and economic program is going to take courage and fighting on the part of someone. But he who fights for the right will win.

Let me again emphasize that death is the opposite of life. *Death is not to be able to move or grow.*

d) Eternal death is eternal suffering, referred to in the Bible as *hell-fire*, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. I cannot tell you what it is like. Some of the people who argue against it will know what it is like when they get there.

2. Eternal life is the opposite of eternal death.

a) Eternal life is eternal union with God.

b) Eternal life is eternal separation from all evil and unhappiness.

c) Eternal life is holiness.

d) Eternal life is the loss of all fear and worry, and to be filled with hope.

e) Eternal life is eternal peace and happiness.

All want eternal life, but *few are willing to pay the price*. Jesus teaches that eternal life costs something.

a) It cost Enoch a walking with God.

b) It cost Elijah lonesome moments running from Ahab.

c) Man's eternal life cost Jesus death on Calvary.

d) It is going to cost you something.

3. Jesus fixed the price of eternal life in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

a) The price of eternal life is to find the fellow who is down. *Find the lost sheep. Go after them.*

b) The price of eternal life as set forth by Jesus is to help the fellow down, not just to pass by him, not just to talk to him, or talk about him, but to *do* something about him.

c) The price of eternal life as set forth by Jesus is to help the fellow down *at any cost*.

(1) This Good Samaritan had to take his own wine for nourishment for the fellow who was down.

(2) This Good Samaritan had to take his own oil for medicine for the wounded man.

(3) This Good Samaritan had to take his own clothes from off his back to bandage up the sick man's wounds.

(4) This Good Samaritan had to struggle with the wounded man *all by himself*, and put him on his beast and carry him to shelter in his own hotel.

(5) This Good Samaritan had to take his own money to pay the wounded man's bills.

(6) This Good Samaritan had to say, "If it costs anything else, *I'll pay that too.*"

(7) Jesus turned and said to the lawyer, and is saying to you today, "*Go thou and do likewise.*"

The Christmas Quest

(Delivered 1942)

. . . the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.—LUKE 2:15"

Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

—MATTHEW 2:2

CHRISTMAS began with a quest, a searching after Jesus, a journey to him and a sincere effort to find him. Sometimes the European legends and mythological tales, and the American growth of social festivities, have overshadowed and obscured the real meaning and spirit of Christmas.

Christmas had its origin, or birth, in human hearts that were hungry for something greater than pies, cakes, candies, turkeys and drinks. Yes, something greater than holly, mistletoe, tin foil and giddy merrymaking. Yes, something greater than exchange of presents, parties, dances, costumes, dinners and balls.

The first Christmas quest was a quest of hungry, yearning souls seeking a Christ who had come to bring to the world the way out of sin, hunger, poverty, slavery, war and confusion. It was

a quest for one who, as an angel sang, would bring "peace on earth, good will to all men."

1. This first Christmas quest was universal in its scope and transcended all bounds of race, creed, class, or color. This is evidenced in our two texts from the Holy Scriptures.

In Luke, humble shepherds of Jewish birth heard the glad news from holy angels standing on the midnight air saying, "Fear not, for I bring you glad tidings of great joy." These shepherds represented the humble working class of people, who were experiencing at the time a form of slavery, just like the Czechs, the Greeks, the Belgians and the French are experiencing under Hitler.

The universality of this quest is further evidenced by the scripture text from our Lord's Gospel according to St. Matthew. For in this case it was the wise men, the scholars, the masters and rulers of knowledge in their native lands who were not Jews, but who had journeyed far to the land of the Jews, guided by a star, and who, because they had lost the star, found their way to Herod, the king, and asked him, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

When Herod searched the Scriptures and had conveyed to them the words of the prophets, they again found the star that had guided them afar. And the Scriptures said, "And when they saw again the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

So you see this quest took in the various races, classes, and conditions of mankind, emphasizing the fact that *Jesus is the Christ of all the world.*

2. This first Christmas quest was an effort to satisfy a yearning of mankind that was as old as man himself. The birth of the world was a birth of man's craving after God: without God, man has been neither safe nor happy. In Eden God visited man in the cool of the day; but when man sinned, God promised, in Eden, his Son as a Saviour, and man was to be saved by making his pilgrimage to God, or questing after God.

3. God has always been present, and Christ has always been accessible to man since that first Christmas quest, if we would but seek them. In all of the darkness and troubles of our war-

torn world, there is still the Christ waiting to cheer and to comfort. There is a painting of a dying soldier on the battlefield, dying alone, but for the spirit of Jesus hovering over him. The title is "Never Alone." He was not alone: Jesus was there.

Jesus can walk the plains of Belgium, Holland and France, to feed the hungry on this Christmas morning, if they will but seek him.

Jesus can walk the African desert to comfort sun-scorched souls, and to comfort them in their troubles, if they will but look to him.

Jesus can be found as a comforter and Saviour on the mountains of Eastern Europe and western Asia, unmoved by bombs and shells, if troubled souls will make the Christmas quest in search of the Christ.

Jesus can reveal his comforting presence at Pearl Harbor, Midway Island and the other islands of the sea this morning, where our soldiers are fighting, if their troubled hearts will make the Christmas quest in search of Jesus this morning.

Jesus will be the comforting Saviour of American mothers and fathers who are giving up their sons to die for the honor of their country—if those mothers and fathers would make the Christmas quest to the feet of Jesus this morning.

Jesus can comfort and soothe the troubled hearts of all who are present this morning, and give us strength for the ordeals and dangers to come, if we will lay aside the world this morning, bickerings and strife, and make the Christmas quest with earnest hearts in search of Jesus as our Comforter and Guide.

I don't know what your troubles have been this year, but I know there have been many. Some have had death invade the family circle, and your hearts are heavy. But Jesus invites you with outstretched arms this morning, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Some of us have broken bodies, pained with disease; but Jesus invites you this morning to make the Christmas quest, and he will ease your pain.

Some of us don't have the money and comforts we need for Christmas, but, thank God, we have Jesus if we will just come to him.

I invite every soul on this Christmas to make the Christmas quest, and have his soul satisfied.

Ghosts

Then said the woman, "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?"

And he said, "Bring me up Samuel."

And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, "Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul."—SAMUEL 28:11-12

I CLOSE this year's work with a most peculiar subject that I hope will cause much serious thinking and will provoke much discussion, for at a time like this I think it profitable to you that my message should be disturbing. This is a time for retrospection, introspection and for thinking about the future possibilities.

In using this subject, Ghosts, I am mindful of the fact that many of you do not believe in ghosts, such as make their appearance by coming through keyholes or through the walls, or that rise up to frighten you in the dark. And I do not come to give any opinion or enter into any discussion about the tradition of this type of ghost.

I come to talk to you about a more real and undisputed type of ghost. I come to talk about these ghosts:

1. *Our ancestral ghosts*—our inherited evil tendencies because of Adamic sin, or our sufferings because of what others did.
2. *The ghost of our past lives*: we are haunted by what we have done.
3. *The ghost of our future*: we are haunted by what we shall face in the future days, months and years.

The text from which I take this subject is most puzzling and disturbing to me. Saul, king of Israel, had a rather checkered life. God directed Samuel to anoint Saul king in answer to the plea of the people. Saul was a fine man and had a great chance, if he had followed God, kept himself straight and used well his opportunities; but he allowed selfishness, hate and personal ambitions to blacken his life and ruin his future.

First, David came to Saul's rescue as a lad and rendered him a service that ought to have been appreciated, but David's popularity, growing out of this deed, made Saul miserable with jealousy and he spent his life trying to kill David. Then Saul's ambition and personal pride got the better of him and led him to disobey God. In the war against the Amalakites, God told Saul to destroy everything, but Saul kept the fatted cattle and the handsome king as trophies of war, and God rejected Saul.

Following the rejection of Saul by the Lord and the announcement of this rejection by Samuel, Samuel died. The Philistines made war against Saul and his people, and Saul found himself in great trouble and needed the help of God; but when he called upon God he could get no answer, for God had deserted him.

No prophet's voice could he hear. No spiritual help could he get from any source. Having tried all other sources, Saul turned to witchcraft, and went to the witch of Endor, disguised, and asked her to "call me up a man whom I shall ask."

This witch called up Samuel, and so quickly and plainly did Samuel appear that it frightened her. Samuel told Saul why he could get no answer and what his plight was.

Let us sit by on this closing Sunday morning and call up a few ghosts and see what they have to say to us.

1. Let us call up our ancestral ghosts:

- a) The Adamic sin—they say that without a new birth you cannot be saved.
- b) The mistakes of our parents.

There are good Japanese and Germans who must suffer in

America this morning because of their ancestry. There are boys and girls, men and women, this morning, who are suffering for their parents' bad deeds. The Scriptures say, "The sins of the parents shall be visited upon the children." Moral weaknesses of the parents affect the children.

2. Let us sit by and call up the ghost of our own past, for we must suffer for what we have done that we should not have done, and we must suffer for what we have not done that we should have done. The Scriptures say be not deceived . . . you shall reap what you have sown.

a) Let us cry with Saul, "Call me up the ghost of my fears." Many of us have neglected to do what we should have done—

- (1) Because we feared public sentiment
- (2) Because we feared failure in the trying
- (3) Because we overlook the fact that God rewards not for the *doing* as much as He does for the trying.

A minister who saw a storm coming called his three sons and told them to fill the woodbox with stove wood. One son was crippled but tried just like the others, but could not do much. The father was watching his efforts, and when the box was filled, the two well boys came running to the father with glee and cried, "Father, we have filled the box."

The crippled boy stood with bowed head and said, "Father, I tried."

The father took him in his arms and said, "Yes, son. I saw you, and you shall have your full reward."

b) Let us sit by and cry, "Call me up the ghost of my mispent youth."

(1) We did not use our opportunities for development. Lost opportunities made us what we are.

(2) We were rebellious to the laws of God and society, and lost both our reputation and our character.

(3) We violated the laws of nature and lost our health. Our physical weakness is a ghost of our past life.

c) Let us sit by and cry, "Call me up the ghost of my home life." Many a happy home life has gone on the rocks because people weren't fair to their vows and responsibilities.

d) Let us sit by and cry, "Call me up the ghost of my church life." Many a member could have been an influential leader if he had just kept straight, done his duty by the church and walked with the Lord. Let us ask the question "What kind of church would my church be if every member of my church were just like me?"

e) Let us sit by and ask, "Call me up the ghost of my lost opportunities." In every walk of life the saddest word is "It might have been."

3. There is another ghost this morning with which we may as well deal, because it is very real. Let us sit by and say, "Call me up the ghost of my future." What does the future hold for me, and how will I be able to stand it? Be not deceived: God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap—trouble, sickness, death, eternity . . .

The answer as to how I can stand it is just one word, *Jesus*.

I Have a Home in Heaven

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.—JOHN 14:1-3

I AM JUST A pilgrim and a sojourner in this earth. This world is not my home.

I was born in this world June 6, 1895, in a little log cabin near Hillsboro, North Carolina. In the family Bible it is recorded that a severe thunderstorm had just shaken the countryside. When the muttering thunder and howling wind had died away, my little voice

could be heard crying, drowning out, for those in the house, the noise of the whippoorwill who was making his evening call and noise of the hoot owl that sat in the tree near by.

These things I read from the record in the family Bible. Needless to say, I do not remember any of them myself, but there are some things I do remember.

One is that as I walked the muddy roads and climbed the clay banks in that little country town, I became conscious that this world was not my home. In my early childhood, something within told me that I had to come to the end of my earthly journey one day, like all the folk I saw dying about me. I remember seeing that old black horse-drawn hearse as it rolled over the clay roads, bearing somebody I knew to the little cemetery that was to be their resting place.

My tender religious mind was stirred by the old Christians as they grunted and talked about their rheumatism, their aches and pains, their sleepless nights and the troubles of this world that were pressing down upon them. I can hear them this morning as they sang with tear-filled eyes and sometimes with tears trickling down their cheeks, "I am so glad that trouble doesn't last always."

I began early in life to study, ponder and pray to find out the secret of life and what lies beyond this earthly journey. The most comforting answer that I have found is in the Scripture that I bring to you this morning.

1. Jesus is here talking to troubled hearts. He says to them, "Let not your heart be troubled."

a) This suggests that there is trouble in this world. You have to mourn sometimes; you have to cry sometimes; you have to be kicked sometimes; but I am so glad that trouble doesn't last always, for *Jesus came into this world to take away my trouble.*

b) Jesus was about to die on the rugged cross and the disciples were filled with sorrow because of the coming death of their Lord. But Jesus makes it known in this text that his dying is to give them a home where the troubles of this world cannot come. He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions." He says, "I am

coming back to take you to my Father's house, which will be the home of my children who believe in me."

2. *I started home a long time ago.* I told you that I could not remember those things written in the family Bible describing my first birth, *but I was born again one day.* That I shall never forget. It was in that same little town, Hillsboro, between midnight and day; after I had prayed all night long, something happened in my soul—I was born again. Jesus took my feet out of the miry clay and put them on the heavenly road and I started toward glory. That was fifty-two years ago, but since that time, I have been running. You asked me where I'm going—I'm going home.

a) *I am going where bodies don't get old.* I've seen my hair get gray; much of it has fallen out. I've seen my teeth go and had to replace two of them with false teeth. I've seen my steps slow up and my sight fail to the extent that I can't read without glasses. I have felt the stiffening of my body when I get up and down, and seen wrinkles come into my face. But my heart leaps with joy when I look away to my heavenly home and realize I am going to have a new body over there, where there is no growing old.

b) *I've had trouble in this world.* I've been talked about. I've had trouble that brought tears and took away my appetite, so that I couldn't eat. I've had trouble in this old world down here that took away my sleep and made me toss all night on my bed; but 'way in the deep hours of the night, a song breaks out in my soul, and I find myself singing, "I'm going home," where the troubles of this world cannot come.

c) *Some of us don't have homes down here.* We are at the mercy of those who will take us in. Some of us can't find a decent place to rent, or money to pay the rent if we do find a place. Some of us have trouble in keeping the homes we have bought down here from getting away from us. Some of our homes are rotting and need repairs, but, thank God, *I have a mansion up there waiting for me in glory* that will never need repair. My home is on a fine, popular street. I am told that the streets are paved with gold. It is so well lighted that there will be no night there.

I'll need no television or radio to entertain me, for I shall hear the angels singing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty."

d) Sometimes we are lonely down here. We sit in our rooms, or sometimes lie on our beds at midnight and yearn for company, and think about our loved ones who have gone on, and wonder, "What are they doing in Heaven today?" But, thank God, when I get home, I'm going to meet my mother, who has gone on, and know there will be no parting, for there is no sickness nor dying up home.

My message to them this morning, as I take this communion is *I'm coming home*. Angels, get my mansion ready, for I am coming home.



